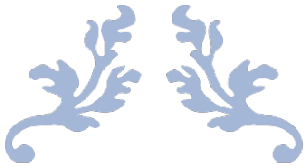


PASTOR STEVEN ANDERSON

The Life, Ministry, and Legacy of a Soul Winner

JADON MACCORMACK

Copyright © 2026 by Jadon MacCormack

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

This book is a work of biography based on publicly available information, personal accounts, and research. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy. Any resemblance to persons, living or dead, beyond the subject of this biography is purely coincidental.

Scripture quotations marked (KJV) are taken from the King James Version of the Bible, which is in the public domain.

Published by: **Jadon MacCormack**

First Edition: 2026

Dedication

This book is dedicated first and foremost to God, who has guided my steps, carried me through seasons of uncertainty, and given purpose to the words you now hold. None of this would exist without His grace and patience. As Scripture reminds us, *"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established"* (Proverbs 16:3, KJV).

I also dedicate this work to Pastor Steven Anderson, whose bold preaching, unwavering stand for the King James Bible, and passionate leadership in soul winning have inspired countless believers to obey the Great Commission with urgency and precision. Pastor Anderson has been at the forefront of the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement, leading the charge by modeling fearless public proclamation of the gospel and training others to do the same.

Through his ministry, he has emphasized the absolute necessity of clearly and thoroughly presenting the gospel to every person, explaining sin, righteousness, judgment, and the free gift of eternal life through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. His example has helped ignite a renewed focus on soul winning, the biblical practice of actively seeking out the lost, engaging them in conversation, and giving them a clear, complete gospel presentation so they can understand their need for salvation and trust Christ alone for it.

The Bible commands us in this work when the Lord Jesus said, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15, KJV). Soul winning, as practiced in this movement, goes far beyond a quick prayer or vague invitation. It involves taking the time to show people from the Scriptures why we are all sinners deserving of hell, how Jesus paid the full penalty for our sins through His death, burial, and resurrection, and how salvation is received by grace through faith alone, without works, baptism, or any other addition. As Proverbs declares, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise"* (Proverbs 11:30, KJV). Pastor Anderson and those influenced by his teaching stress thoroughness: making sure the listener truly comprehends the gospel message rather than leaving them with a superficial or incomplete understanding. This approach has produced dedicated soul winners who go out consistently into the highways and hedges to compel the lost to come in.

I am especially grateful to my friend Jonathan Lee, who was deeply influenced by the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement. It was through Jonathan that I first saw how far beyond any other group of Christians this movement understands how to give a gospel presentation, being the most thorough, clear, and Scripture-saturated I had ever encountered. His passion for soul winning opened my eyes to the urgency and effectiveness of this biblical method. That encounter changed everything for me.

It led me to become one of the most dedicated soul winners in New England, going out regularly to share the gospel on the streets, at doors, and in everyday encounters. It also gave me the privilege of fellowshipping and laboring alongside some of the greatest soul winners of the 21st century, men and women who take the Great Commission seriously and refuse to settle for anything less than faithful, bold proclamation of the true gospel.

To my parents, whose love, prayers, and constant support have been a lifelong anchor. Their sacrifices, encouragement, and belief in me have made more of a difference than words can fully express.

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE 7

Chapter 1 19

A CHILD MARKED BY CURIOSITY AND FAITH 19

Chapter 2 29

A CHILDHOOD OF CHANGE AND RESILIENCE 29

Chapter 3 40

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM 40

Chapter 4 51

ADVENTURE, BICYCLES, AND IMAGINATION 51

Chapter 5 63

GRANDMOTHER AND DICK'S HOUSE 63

Chapter 6 78

SKILLS, MUSIC, AND THE DESERT ADVENTURE 78

Chapter 7 92

SEVENTH GRADE TRIALS AND DISCIPLINE 92

Chapter 8 104

HIGH SCHOOL CHALLENGES AND AWAKENING CONVICTIONS 104

Chapter 9 117

PUBLIC SCHOOL AND NEW FRIENDSHIPS 117

Chapter 10 129

THE GOSPEL TRACT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING .. 129

Chapter 11 144

YOUTH GROUP, FIRST SERMON, AND SOUL WINNING 144

Chapter 12 157

MISSIONARY DREAMS AND GERMANY 157

Chapter 13 171

A DIVINE ROMANCE 171
Chapter 14 187
MARRIAGE AND EARLY FAMILY LIFE 187
Chapter 15 201
COLLEGE, MINISTRY TRAINING, AND THE ROAD AHEAD 201
Chapter 16 213
FOUNDING FAITHFUL WORD BAPTIST CHURCH 213
Chapter 17 224
NEW IFB DOCTRINES AND BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS ... 224
Chapter 18 233
THE SOUL WINNING REVOLUTION 233
Chapter 19 242
CONTROVERSIES, COURAGE, AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE 242
Chapter 20 251
LEGACY, LEADERSHIP, AND THE FUTURE 251
EPILOGUE 261
A Life of Purpose, A Voice That Echoes 261
REFERENCES 269

PROLOGUE

Every generation witnesses the rise of individuals whose lives seem almost designed to challenge the status quo. They emerge from ordinary circumstances yet carry a conviction that compels them to stand firmly where others hesitate. Their words stir debate, their actions inspire followers, and their lives become stories of determination shaped by faith. Such individuals are rarely timid. They are driven by a belief that truth must be proclaimed boldly regardless of opposition. Pastor Steven Anderson belongs to that rare category of men.

His story does not begin in a large cathedral or a famous seminary. It begins quietly in Sacramento, California, where a young boy developed an unusual love for learning long before most children begin their education. From the earliest years of his

life there were hints that he possessed a curious mind and a determined spirit. Those early days were filled with the ordinary scenes of childhood, yet woven through them were experiences that would eventually shape a preacher whose voice would reach far beyond the neighborhoods of his youth.

The Scriptures remind us that God often prepares His servants long before the world notices them. The prophet Jeremiah recorded the words of the Lord saying, *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee"* (Jeremiah 1:5, KJV). Whether one speaks of prophets, apostles, missionaries, or pastors, their journeys rarely begin with fame or influence. They begin with quiet seasons of preparation. For Steven Anderson those seasons were scattered across classrooms, family homes, construction sites, dusty desert trails, and small churches where the preaching of the Word of God stirred his heart.

As a very young child he demonstrated an eagerness to learn that surprised those around him. While many children were still learning basic letters, he was already reading simple books under the guidance of his mother. She encouraged his curiosity by purchasing educational workbooks and patiently helping him work through them at home. By the age of three he could read words and sentences that most children his age had never encountered. His early reading ability allowed him to begin

formal schooling earlier than usual. At just four years old he stepped into a kindergarten classroom surrounded by classmates who were often a year older and physically larger.

For many children such an environment might have felt intimidating, yet these early experiences quietly forged a resilience that would remain with him throughout life. The Bible observes, *"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men"* (Proverbs 22:29, KJV). Though no one could have predicted it at the time, the diligence of that young boy would eventually propel him into a ministry that reached thousands of people across the world.

His childhood, however, was far from predictable. During his early years he attended a series of different schools as his family moved from place to place. Within the span of only six years, he found himself enrolled in six different schools. Each new environment required him to start over with new teachers, unfamiliar classmates, and fresh expectations. While such transitions might have discouraged many students, they quietly taught him how to adapt and interact with people from different backgrounds. These experiences would later prove invaluable in ministry, where pastors must connect with individuals from every walk of life.

One of his earliest school memories came from a small Christian school that used the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum. Though he had already learned to read at home, the classroom emphasized phonics and foundational literacy skills. Among the lessons he remembered most vividly was a humorous phonics song about the letter A. The song told the story of an aging ape who grew out of shape because he simply ate and ate and ate. The rhyme was playful and lighthearted, yet it remained in his memory long after many other childhood lessons had faded.

Education in those early years sometimes took place in unusual settings. At one point his family attended a church that met in a private home. The associated school operated from the garage of that house. Students sat at desks completing their assignments while the open garage door allowed sunlight to stream into the room. Recess took place in the backyard, and the classroom atmosphere was far removed from the polished halls of large educational institutions. Yet those humble surroundings reinforced a powerful truth that many believers have discovered through the centuries. The presence of learning and faith does not depend on grand buildings. It depends on hearts willing to pursue truth.

During his second-grade year another pivotal moment occurred. One evening his mother sat beside his bed and carefully explained the gospel of Jesus Christ. She opened the Bible and

walked him through several passages that revealed the promise of eternal life through faith in Christ. Among the verses she shared was the powerful declaration of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24, KJV).

For the young boy listening beside his bed, those words carried enormous significance. The message of salvation was no longer an abstract concept taught in church. It became a personal invitation to place his faith in Christ. That evening he prayed and asked Jesus to save him. Whether one examines the story through theological reflection or simple faith, that moment became a defining milestone in his spiritual journey.

As the years passed his childhood expanded beyond classrooms and church services into a world filled with adventure and exploration. Like many boys growing up in the late twentieth century, he spent countless hours outdoors riding bicycles with neighborhood friends. Their BMX bikes carried them through streets, empty fields, and newly developing neighborhoods where houses were still under construction. Those construction sites became playgrounds of imagination. With scraps of plywood and boards they built makeshift ramps that launched their bikes into daring jumps. Crashes were common and often left them with

scraped knees and bruised elbows, yet the thrill of adventure kept them returning day after day.

Those early adventures were accompanied by routines that now feel almost nostalgic in a world dominated by digital entertainment. On summer mornings he and his friends would ride their bikes to a nearby shopping center. They would stand outside the window of a pizza restaurant waiting eagerly for it to open. Before that moment arrived, they often wandered into a neighboring store where shelves of comic strip collections provided hours of entertainment. Sitting quietly in the aisles they read stories from Charlie Brown, Calvin and Hobbes, and The Far Side while time slowly passed.

When the pizza restaurant finally opened its doors, they would rush inside to purchase a simple meal that cost just over two dollars. The meal included a small personal pizza and unlimited soda refills. To them it felt like a feast. Sometimes they scraped together the money by searching for coins in couch cushions or under car seats. Those modest outings carried a joy that remains difficult to replicate in later years when responsibilities replace the carefree days of childhood.

Family visits also created memories that would last a lifetime. Among the most colorful influences in his young life was his grandfather Richard Tackerberry, a retired police lieutenant

whose personality filled every room he entered. The grandchildren affectionately called him Dick because that was the name he preferred. His home, located in a wooded area of northern California, felt like an adventurous retreat where children could explore the surrounding forest for hours.

Dick was a man of unusual habits and remarkable stories. He had built his own house and even constructed homes for some of his children. Inside the garage stood a refrigerator stocked with small bottles of apple juice and soda. The grandchildren were welcome to drink as many as they wished provided, they finished every bottle they opened. Half-finished drinks were not allowed. The rule seemed strict at the time, yet it reflected the disciplined character of a man who believed in finishing what he started.

The house carried its own distinct atmosphere. Whenever the family entered, they were greeted by the strong aroma of garlic from the kitchen. Dick enjoyed cooking with garlic and used it generously in nearly every meal. He also possessed a fascination with technology that seemed unusual for someone of his generation. At a time when many people struggled to program a VCR, he owned two of them and had mastered their operation completely. His solution to television advertising was simple. He recorded his favorite programs and watched them later while fast forwarding through every commercial.

The grandchildren listened eagerly to his stories from years of police service and even from his youth when he enlisted in World War Two before reaching the legal age. His garage also contained a speed bag used for boxing practice. Whenever the grandchildren visited, he demonstrated boxing techniques and insisted that everything began with mastering the left jab. Though the lessons were delivered with humor, they reflected the disciplined mindset that defined his life.

Among the many gifts he gave his grandchildren was an old guitar stored in the rafters of the garage. When it was brought down a wasp nest had been built inside it. After removing most of the nest the instrument became Steven's first guitar. Even the unusual muffled tone caused by the remaining nest seemed to add character to the instrument. Music gradually became another avenue of expression in his young life as he later began teaching himself to play the piano using instruction books purchased by his mother.

Life was not without moments of danger and fear. One particularly dramatic incident occurred during a dirt bike trip in the Nevada desert. While exploring trails with other riders he became separated from the group and soon realized he was completely lost. Hours passed as he rode through the vast desert landscape searching desperately for familiar landmarks. The sun slowly moved toward the horizon and the realization dawned on

him that desert temperatures would soon drop below freezing. Without proper equipment survival through the night seemed unlikely.

At last he encountered another rider who agreed to guide him back toward the campsite. By the time he returned nearly eight hours had passed. His father was preparing to organize a search party when he finally appeared. The experience left a powerful impression on him about the fragility of life and the value of perseverance in moments of uncertainty.

As adolescence approached new challenges emerged. The transition into teenage years often exposes young people to influences that test their convictions. During his time in high school, he observed behaviors among classmates that troubled him deeply. Instances of drug use and exposure to immoral materials confronted him with questions about integrity and faith. These experiences forced him to consider what it truly meant to live according to biblical principles.

One turning point came when he encountered a church that emphasized passionate preaching and active evangelism. The sermons were long, energetic, and filled with Scripture. Rather than delivering brief motivational talks, the preacher opened the Bible repeatedly and connected passages from different books

with remarkable intensity. Listening to those messages ignited a desire within him to share the gospel with others.

The Bible declares, *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God"* (First Corinthians 1:18, KJV). For the young man sitting in those church services, the power of that message was undeniable. Soon he began participating in door-to-door evangelism where church members visited neighborhoods to share the gospel with strangers. The experience transformed his understanding of faith. Christianity was no longer merely a belief system discussed in classrooms. It became an active mission to tell others about salvation.

One of his earliest attempts at evangelism produced an unexpected result. After inviting a young girl to church he was surprised when she actually attended the next day and eventually placed her faith in Christ. Moments like these reinforced the conviction that sharing the gospel could truly change lives.

As the years unfolded new chapters awaited him. Travels to Germany introduced him to missionary work and eventually led to a remarkable relationship with the woman who would become his wife. Their meeting in a crowded square in Munich began with a simple misunderstanding about a gospel tract. Yet that

brief conversation would eventually grow into a story of faith, conversion, and marriage that shaped the future of his ministry.

Their life together began modestly with little more than determination and trust in God's provision. In a small apartment furnished with only the essentials they built a family and devoted themselves to serving in church ministries. Opportunities to preach gradually increased as he spoke in nursing homes, children's services, and evangelistic outreach programs.

Through these experiences his calling to ministry grew stronger. The apostle Paul once wrote, *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"* (First Corinthians 9:16, KJV). That sense of urgency began to define Steven Anderson's life. The message of salvation was not something he felt comfortable keeping to himself. It demanded proclamation.

The path ahead would lead through college studies, cross country moves, demanding jobs, and countless hours devoted to preaching and evangelism. Eventually those experiences would culminate in the founding of a church that would grow into a significant influence within the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement. Yet the story of that ministry cannot be understood without first examining the experiences that shaped the man behind it.

This biography explores that journey. It traces the path from curious child to determined preacher, from neighborhood bicycle adventures to international ministry influence. Along the way it reveals how faith, perseverance, and conviction shaped a life dedicated to proclaiming the message of the Bible.

Every story begins somewhere. For Steven Anderson it began with a young boy learning to read beside his mother, a simple prayer beside a bed, and a growing conviction that the truth of the gospel must be proclaimed without fear. The chapters that follow will reveal how that conviction transformed an ordinary life into a ministry that continues to spark conversation, challenge complacency, and inspire believers around the world.

Chapter 1

A CHILD MARKED BY CURIOSITY AND FAITH

Every life story begins quietly. Long before public recognition, influence, or ministry, there are the unseen years when character is formed, habits are learned, and convictions begin to take root. For Pastor Steven Anderson, those early years unfolded in the city of Sacramento, California, where he was born in 1981. No one standing in the hospital room on that day could have predicted that the newborn child would one day become a preacher whose voice would travel far beyond the streets of his hometown. Yet the seeds of that future were already present, quietly growing beneath the surface.

Sacramento in the early 1980s was a growing city filled with neighborhoods where children played outside until the sun went down and families gathered around dinner tables in the evening. It was an environment where childhood still carried a sense of freedom and discovery. Within that setting Steven's life began in a home where faith and family shaped daily life. The atmosphere of the home was not defined by wealth or social prominence. Instead, it was defined by something far more valuable. It was a home where the Bible was respected and where the idea of knowing God was not merely a religious concept but a real part of everyday conversation.

The Scriptures speak often about the power of early influence. In the book of Proverbs there is a simple but profound instruction that has guided parents for generations. *"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"* (Proverbs 22:6, KJV). This principle does not promise that every child will live a perfect life, but it reminds us that the direction given during childhood often becomes the foundation upon which adulthood is built. In Steven's home the influence of faith and Scripture created an environment where curiosity about truth was encouraged.

From the earliest days of his life one particular trait stood out clearly. Steven possessed an intense curiosity. He wanted to understand things. He wanted to know how words worked, how

ideas fit together, and why certain things were the way they were. Many children display moments of curiosity, yet in his case the interest seemed unusually strong. Instead of being satisfied with simple answers, he often wanted to go deeper.

His mother noticed this tendency very early. While many parents struggle to convince their children to sit still long enough to learn basic letters, she observed that Steven was drawn naturally toward learning. Rather than waiting for formal schooling to begin, she decided to nurture his interest herself. She began purchasing simple educational workbooks and reading materials designed for young children. These books contained colorful pages filled with letters, words, and simple exercises that introduced the foundations of reading.

What began as casual learning soon developed into something remarkable. By the time Steven reached the age of three he had already learned to read basic words and sentences. His mother patiently worked through the books with him, sounding out letters and guiding him through small reading exercises. Those early lessons became moments of discovery. Each new word opened the door to another sentence. Each sentence opened the door to another page.

In later years Steven would often reflect on those early learning experiences with gratitude. They represented more than academic

preparation. They were expressions of a mother investing time and effort into her child's future. The book of Proverbs speaks of this kind of wisdom when it declares, *"My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother"* (Proverbs 1:8, KJV). The influence of parental instruction becomes a treasure stored in the heart.

Because he learned to read so early, Steven's entrance into formal education happened sooner than most children. When he reached four years of age, he began attending kindergarten. In the classroom he was younger than nearly all of his classmates. Many of them were a year older and noticeably larger. For some children this situation might have produced feelings of insecurity, yet Steven approached it with the same curiosity that defined his early learning. School was simply another opportunity to discover new ideas.

The classroom environment reinforced skills he had already begun developing at home. Phonics lessons, alphabet exercises, and reading drills filled the early days of his education. While other children were just beginning to connect letters with sounds, Steven already recognized many of the patterns. He approached assignments with enthusiasm rather than reluctance.

Teachers often notice certain students who seem particularly engaged with the material being taught. Steven quickly became

one of those students. He enjoyed reading. He enjoyed learning new concepts. He also enjoyed the sense of accomplishment that came from mastering something challenging.

Such diligence at a young age often reveals something deeper than simple intelligence. It reflects a mindset that values effort and perseverance. The Bible frequently emphasizes these qualities. The book of Proverbs offers a vivid description when it says, *"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule"* (Proverbs 12:24, KJV). Diligence does not always produce immediate success, but it establishes habits that eventually lead to growth.

Within the Anderson household the Bible itself played an important role in shaping daily life. Scripture was not treated as an ancient book that belonged only in church buildings. It was discussed within the home and regarded as a guide for life. The language of the King James Bible became familiar to Steven at a young age. Verses and biblical stories appeared naturally in conversation.

This exposure created a framework for understanding the world. The Bible presents life as more than a series of random events. It describes a Creator who governs the universe and offers redemption through Jesus Christ. Even when children do not fully grasp the depth of those truths, repeated exposure allows them to become familiar with the language and ideas of Scripture.

Church attendance also became part of Steven's early life. Services introduced him to the rhythms of worship, preaching, and biblical teaching. Sitting in church as a child sometimes meant listening to messages that seemed long or difficult to understand. Yet those experiences planted seeds that would later grow into conviction.

One of the remarkable things about childhood is how impressions form quietly over time. A verse heard during a sermon might linger in the mind. A story about a biblical hero might capture the imagination. The apostle Paul wrote about this process in his letter to Timothy when he reminded the young minister about his own upbringing. *"And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (Second Timothy 3:15, KJV).

Steven's childhood mirrored that principle. The Scriptures became part of the intellectual and spiritual environment in which he was growing. Even when the full meaning of the passages was not yet clear, the words themselves were stored in memory.

Curiosity remained one of his defining traits. He often asked questions. He wanted to understand not only what the Bible said but why it said it. This tendency would later become an important part of his preaching style. Instead of approaching Scripture

casually, he developed a habit of examining passages carefully and comparing them with other verses throughout the Bible.

Confidence also began appearing as part of his personality. This confidence did not manifest as arrogance but as a willingness to speak and engage with ideas. Children sometimes display hesitation when interacting with adults or unfamiliar situations. Steven often approached those situations with curiosity rather than fear.

Determination accompanied that confidence. When he encountered something difficult, whether a reading exercise or a new concept, he rarely abandoned the effort quickly. Instead, he continued working until he understood it. Such persistence may appear ordinary in a child, yet when it is nurtured properly it becomes a powerful force later in life.

Faith and curiosity together formed a unique combination. Curiosity pushed him to explore ideas and ask questions. Faith provided a moral and spiritual framework that directed those explorations toward Scripture.

The Bible itself encourages this pursuit of understanding. In the book of Proverbs, we find the invitation, *"If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God"* (Proverbs 2:4 and 5, KJV). The search for wisdom requires effort,

patience, and a willingness to dig deeper than surface level knowledge.

In Steven's early years that search often took the form of reading. Books fascinated him. Words opened doors to new ideas. Whether reading educational materials or listening to Bible passages, he discovered that language carried power. Words could instruct, persuade, and inspire.

This realization would later become central to his calling as a preacher. Preaching itself is built upon the spoken and written Word of God. The preacher opens the Bible and communicates its message to others. That calling requires a deep respect for the authority of Scripture and a passion for explaining it clearly.

Yet at this stage of life no one would have predicted such a future with certainty. He was simply a young boy growing up in Sacramento, learning to read, attending school, and listening to Bible lessons at church.

What makes those early years significant is not the presence of dramatic events but the quiet formation of habits. A love for learning was developing. A familiarity with Scripture was taking root. Confidence and determination were emerging within his personality.

The prophet Samuel's childhood in the Old Testament provides an interesting parallel. Before Samuel became a great leader in Israel, he was simply a child serving in the temple. The Bible describes those years briefly but meaningfully. *"And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favor both with the Lord, and also with men"* (First Samuel 2:26, KJV). Growth in wisdom and character often occurs quietly long before public leadership appears.

In many ways Steven's early life reflected that same pattern. His days were filled with ordinary activities that gradually shaped his thinking and character. A mother teaching her child to read. A family attending church services. A young student discovering joy in learning.

These experiences may appear simple, yet they form the foundation upon which greater responsibilities are later built. Without that foundation the later chapters of his life would have unfolded very differently.

As the years continued to pass, Steven's curiosity would lead him through many different environments. Schools would change. Friendships would form and fade. Adventures would fill his childhood with stories that ranged from humorous to dangerous. Yet through all of those experiences the early lessons of faith and learning would remain constant.

God often prepares His servants through seasons that appear ordinary. The world may overlook those seasons, but heaven does not. The Psalmist captured this truth beautifully when he wrote, *"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works"* (Psalm 71:17, KJV).

For Steven Anderson the journey had only begun. The curious child in Sacramento was still discovering the world around him. The preacher he would eventually become was still hidden within those early years. Yet the hand of providence was already guiding his path, shaping his mind, and planting within his heart a conviction that the Word of God mattered.

The story of that conviction and how it would grow stronger through the challenges and adventures of childhood is only beginning to unfold.

Chapter 2

A CHILDHOOD OF CHANGE AND RESILIENCE

Childhood is often imagined as a time of stability. Many people picture a young boy growing up in one neighborhood, attending the same school for years, surrounded by the same friends and teachers. For some children that picture becomes reality. For others life unfolds very differently. In the early years of Steven Anderson's life, change was not the exception. It was the pattern.

During the first years of his education, he attended six different schools in six years. Almost every year brought a new classroom, new teachers, and new classmates. For a young child this kind of constant relocation could easily become discouraging. Each new school meant leaving behind the friendships and routines that had

just begun to feel familiar. Yet those repeated transitions quietly shaped an ability that would later become invaluable in ministry. They taught him how to adapt.

In many ways adaptability is one of the most important traits a person can develop. The Bible reminds believers that life is not always predictable. Circumstances shift. Environments change. Yet those who trust in God learn to move forward with faith even when the surroundings are unfamiliar. The prophet Isaiah captured this spirit of trust when he wrote, *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee"* (Isaiah 26:3, KJV).

For Steven, the shifting environments of childhood created an early training ground for that kind of resilience. Each new school required him to step into unfamiliar territory and find his place among new groups of children.

His formal education began at Calvary Baptist School when he entered kindergarten at the age of four. Because he had already learned to read at home under the patient instruction of his mother, he entered the classroom with skills that many of his classmates were still developing. Yet even with that advantage, the environment required adjustment. Most of the other students were older and slightly larger. For a young boy stepping into a

classroom filled with unfamiliar faces, the experience could have felt intimidating.

Instead, he approached it with curiosity. School was a place of discovery, and discovery had always excited him.

Calvary Baptist School used a style of instruction known as Accelerated Christian Education, often referred to as the ACE curriculum. The system placed strong emphasis on phonics, reading development, and individual learning through structured workbooks. Students progressed through lessons step by step, building skills gradually while reinforcing biblical values alongside academic subjects.

The classroom environment was simple yet focused. Children worked quietly through their assignments while teachers provided guidance and encouragement. The method encouraged self-discipline and responsibility even at an early age. For a childlike Steven, who already enjoyed learning, the environment felt natural.

One memory from that year remained especially vivid in his mind. Among the phonics lessons the students learned a playful song about the letter A. The song described an aging ape who became round and out of shape because he ate and ate and ate. The rhyme was humorous and simple, yet it captured the

imagination of the young students. Long after the lesson ended the song remained lodged in Steven's memory.

Such moments may appear small, yet they represent the texture of childhood education. A song learned in a classroom. A page filled with letters and sounds. A teacher guiding children through their first experiences with reading and language. Each detail becomes part of the larger story of growth.

At home the learning continued. Because he had already developed the ability to read at a young age, books became companions rather than obstacles. Reading opened doors into new ideas and stories. It also allowed him to engage more deeply with the Bible, which was an important part of the spiritual atmosphere within his home.

The Bible often emphasizes the importance of learning during youth. The book of Ecclesiastes contains a powerful reminder directed toward young people. *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"* (Ecclesiastes 12:1, KJV). Those words reflect the belief that early years provide a unique opportunity to establish spiritual foundations that will guide the rest of life.

During the kindergarten year those foundations continued to develop quietly. The combination of church teaching, family instruction, and Christian education created an environment where biblical ideas were woven naturally into daily life.

Yet stability did not last long. After kindergarten the circumstances surrounding his education changed again.

Steven began first grade at the same school, but the year soon took an unexpected turn. His family left the church that operated the school and began attending another congregation that met in a much smaller setting. Instead of a traditional church building, the new church gathered in a private home.

Because the congregation was small, the school associated with it was equally unconventional. Classes took place in the garage of the house.

To an outsider the arrangement might have seemed unusual. The garage classroom lacked the polished appearance of a typical school. Yet within that modest space students gathered around desks to study their lessons. Workbooks rested on wooden surfaces while sunlight filtered through the open garage door. The atmosphere was simple, yet the purpose remained clear. Learning was taking place.

Recess did not involve a large playground with elaborate equipment. Instead, the students stepped outside into the backyard where they could stretch their legs, run, and play for a few minutes before returning to their assignments.

For Steven this environment became his first-grade classroom. Though unconventional, it reinforced an important truth about education and faith. The value of learning does not depend on the size or elegance of a building. It depends on the commitment of those who gather within it.

The early Christian church itself often met in homes. In the book of Acts we read about believers gathering from house to house while sharing fellowship and teaching. *"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart"* (Acts 2:46, KJV). In many ways the garage classroom reflected that same spirit of simplicity.

Yet even as he adjusted to this unusual school environment, another transition waited ahead.

When second grade arrived, the family moved again to a different church, this time Tabernacle Baptist Church. As before, the move brought another new school environment. New classmates filled the classroom. New teachers introduced their own methods and expectations.

For many children such constant change might produce anxiety or discouragement. Yet these transitions slowly developed an ability to adapt quickly. Each time he entered a new classroom he

learned how to observe the environment, understand the expectations, and begin building new friendships.

Social adaptability is a skill often overlooked in childhood education, yet it becomes essential later in life. Ministry especially requires the ability to connect with people from many backgrounds. A pastor must communicate with children, teenagers, parents, elderly individuals, and people who may have very different life experiences. The early pattern of changing schools quietly prepared Steven for that kind of interaction.

Amid all these educational transitions something even more significant occurred during the second-grade year.

One evening his mother sat beside his bed and began speaking with him about spiritual matters. Parents sometimes underestimate the power of such moments. Yet throughout history many life-changing decisions have occurred in quiet conversations between parents and children.

His mother opened the Bible and began explaining the message of the gospel. She carefully walked through several passages of Scripture that describe the condition of humanity and the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. The conversation was gentle but clear.

Among the verses she shared was a statement spoken by Jesus Himself. The words come from the Gospel of John and express the certainty of salvation through faith. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life"* (John 5:24, KJV).

The verse carries a powerful message. Jesus does not speak in uncertain terms. He declares that the one who hears His word and believes on the Father possesses everlasting life. The promise includes freedom from condemnation and the assurance that the believer has passed from death into life.

As his mother explained these truths, the message began to make sense to the young boy listening beside his bed. Christianity was no longer simply something taught in church services or mentioned in family conversations. The gospel became personal.

At 6 years old Steven made a decision that would remain central to his life story. He prayed and asked Jesus Christ to save him.

Children sometimes experience spiritual moments in ways that adults may overlook. Yet the Bible itself repeatedly affirms that faith is not limited by age. Jesus once welcomed children with open arms while correcting those who attempted to send them away. *"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"* (Luke 18:16, KJV).

The simplicity of childlike faith often carries a sincerity that is deeply genuine. For Steven the decision to trust Christ marked a turning point. Though he could not yet foresee the path his life would follow, that moment established a spiritual anchor that would remain steady through the years ahead.

The assurance contained in John 5:24 became particularly meaningful. The verse declares not only the promise of eternal life but also the present reality of salvation. The believer *"hath everlasting life."* The language is not future tense. It describes something already possessed by faith.

This understanding of salvation through faith alone would later become one of the central convictions in Steven's preaching and teaching. The belief that eternal life is received through trusting Christ rather than through human effort shaped his theological outlook from an early age.

Faith was no longer merely something he observed in others. It had become his own.

Yet even after this important spiritual moment the rhythm of childhood continued. School assignments still needed to be completed. New environments still required adaptation. Friendships still formed and changed.

What had shifted was the deeper foundation beneath those experiences. The gospel message now carried personal meaning.

As the years progressed the pattern of change continued. New schools brought new challenges, yet they also created opportunities to develop confidence and resilience. Each transition required him to step into unfamiliar surroundings and learn how to function within them.

This process often strengthens character. The apostle Paul once wrote about the way trials produce perseverance and growth. *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope"* (Romans 5:3 and 4, KJV).

Though childhood school changes are not the same as the trials Paul described, the principle remains relevant. Difficulty often produces strength.

By the time Steven completed his early elementary years he had already experienced more transitions than many children encounter during their entire education. Yet those experiences did not diminish his curiosity or enthusiasm for learning. Instead, they strengthened his ability to move forward despite uncertainty.

Looking back later in life, he would recognize that those constant changes had prepared him for future ministry. A pastor frequently

encounters new situations, unfamiliar communities, and unexpected challenges. The ability to adapt while remaining faithful to core convictions becomes essential.

The young boy moving from classroom to classroom could not yet see that future. Yet God was quietly shaping the skills he would need.

Faith had taken root through a conversation beside a bed. Resilience had grown through the experience of changing environments. Curiosity continued to drive his interest in learning and understanding.

The journey was still only beginning.

What lay ahead would include adventures, friendships, struggles, and moments of discovery that would continue shaping the life of the boy who had learned to trust Christ at six years old.

And through every chapter of that unfolding story, the promise of Scripture would remain true. *"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way"* (Psalm 37:23, KJV).

Chapter 3

LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Education is often associated with desks, chalkboards, textbooks, and teachers standing at the front of a room. Yet many of life's most meaningful lessons unfold far beyond the walls of a classroom. The shaping of character, the discovery of new abilities, and the quiet formation of wisdom frequently occur in places that do not resemble school at all.

For Steven Anderson, one particular year of childhood would illustrate this truth in a memorable way. After several years of changing schools and adapting to new environments, his fourth-grade year unfolded in a very different setting. Instead of sitting in a classroom surrounded by rows of desks and fellow students, he spent that year learning at home under the guidance of his mother.

Homeschooling was not as common in those years as it would later become. For many families it represented both an opportunity and a challenge. It required dedication, patience, and creativity. For Steven's mother it was simply another way of investing in her children's development.

When 4th grade began, the classroom became the living room, the kitchen table, and sometimes even the backyard. Lessons were woven into daily life rather than confined to a rigid school schedule. The environment allowed learning to unfold in ways that were sometimes unexpected and surprisingly memorable.

Although Steven would later admit that he could not recall every academic detail from that year, certain experiences stood out clearly in his memory. Those experiences revealed that education is not limited to memorizing facts or completing worksheets. It also includes discovering how the world works and learning new skills through hands on exploration.

One of the most memorable activities during that homeschooling year involved physical education. Instead of traditional school sports or structured athletic programs, his mother introduced him and his younger sister Lisa to tumbling exercises. These exercises resembled the floor movements used in gymnastics.

The lessons took place right in the home. The living room floor became a training ground where two young siblings practiced

movements that required coordination, balance, and persistence. Cartwheels were among the first skills they attempted. At first the movement felt awkward. Hands and feet had to land in precise positions. The body had to rotate smoothly. Yet with practice the motion gradually became easier.

Headstands soon followed. Balancing upside-down required concentration and confidence. Each attempt involved a moment of uncertainty as gravity pulled against the body. Yet with determination and encouragement the children learned to hold their position for longer periods of time.

Eventually they progressed to more advanced movements such as handsprings. These exercises demanded both strength and courage. Launching the body forward while trusting the hands to support the landing required a willingness to attempt something that initially felt intimidating.

Though these activities may have appeared playful on the surface, they carried deeper lessons. Learning physical skills teaches perseverance. Rarely does anyone master a new movement on the first attempt. Progress requires repetition and patience.

The Bible frequently speaks about the value of perseverance. In the New Testament the apostle Paul wrote about discipline using the imagery of athletics. *"Know ye not that they which run in a*

race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (First Corinthians 9:24, KJV). The imagery reminds believers that effort and discipline are essential in many areas of life.

Those childhood tumbling lessons quietly reinforced the importance of persistence. Each successful cartwheel or balanced headstand represented progress achieved through effort.

Yet the homeschooling year also introduced Steven to another area of learning that would become increasingly important in the decades ahead. While practicing tumbling at home, he also began encountering early computer technology through a weekly class at a local public school.

Computers during that era looked very different from the sleek devices people carry today. The machines he encountered were early Apple Macintosh computers, large beige boxes with small screens and simple interfaces. To modern observers they might appear primitive, yet at the time they represented a fascinating glimpse into the future.

For a young boy with a curious mind, those machines felt almost magical. They could display images, respond to commands, and run educational programs designed to teach through interactive experiences.

Each week Steven attended the computer class where students learned how to use these early systems. The environment was both educational and entertaining. Children sat in front of the glowing screens experimenting with software that blended learning with play.

Among the programs he encountered, one in particular captured his imagination. It was a game that many students of that era would remember vividly. The game was called The Oregon Trail.

The Oregon Trail simulated the experience of traveling across the American frontier during the nineteenth century. Players guided a group of pioneers traveling westward in covered wagons. Along the journey they encountered rivers, mountains, illness, and countless other challenges that settlers once faced.

Though designed as an educational tool, the game felt like an adventure. Players made decisions about supplies, travel routes, and strategies for survival. Hunting for food became part of the experience. Managing resources required careful thinking. Sometimes the journey ended in success, and sometimes it ended in failure.

For Steven the game offered more than entertainment. It sparked an imagination about history and exploration. It presented a world in which decisions carried consequences and perseverance determined success.

Looking back later in life, he would recognize that the game subtly reinforced lessons about endurance and resilience. Pioneer families crossing the frontier faced immense hardship. Yet many continued forward despite obstacles that might have discouraged others.

The Bible speaks about that same spirit of perseverance. The writer of Hebrews encouraged believers with these words. *"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us"* (Hebrews 12:1, KJV). Just as pioneers endured difficult journeys in search of a better future, believers are called to move forward faithfully through life's challenges.

The homeschooling year therefore became a time of discovery in unexpected ways. Physical exercises strengthened the body. Computer classes introduced technology and creative thinking. Historical simulations like The Oregon Trail stimulated curiosity about the past.

Yet even as these experiences unfolded, another transition was quietly approaching.

Eventually Steven's parents discovered a church that excited them deeply. The church was called Citadel Baptist Church, and its congregation placed strong emphasis on biblical teaching and Christian education. Naturally the family wanted their children to attend the church's school.

Steven assumed that he would simply continue progressing academically. Having completed 4th grade through homeschooling, he expected to enter fifth grade when he joined the new school.

However, when his mother returned from the enrollment process, she delivered surprising news.

He would be repeating fourth grade.

The decision came as a disappointment. Like many students, Steven preferred the idea of moving forward rather than repeating material he had already studied. To him the thought of staying in the same grade felt like stepping backward.

Yet his mother had made the decision with thoughtful reasoning. Because he had started school earlier than most children, he was already younger and smaller than many of his classmates. She believed that repeating fourth grade would benefit him socially and physically.

At nine years old he struggled to understand the wisdom behind that decision. From his perspective the change felt unnecessary. He had completed the academic requirements and was eager to advance.

Moments like these often appear in childhood. Parents sometimes make choices that children initially resist or misunderstand. Yet

those decisions frequently reflect a broader perspective shaped by experience.

The Bible encourages young people to trust the guidance of their parents. The book of Proverbs offers a simple but powerful instruction. *"Hear, my son, thy father's instruction, and forsake not the law of thy mother"* (Proverbs 1:8, KJV). Obedience in such moments does not always feel easy, yet it often leads to long term benefit.

Though disappointed, Steven accepted the decision and prepared to begin the school year at Citadel Baptist School.

The experience quickly produced its own memorable moments.

On his first day in the classroom, he noticed something unusual about the seating arrangement. Every desk surrounding his seat was occupied by girls. One sat on his left side. Another sat on his right. A third sat directly in front of him. A fourth sat behind him.

To a nine-year-old boy this arrangement felt extremely unfortunate.

At first, he assumed the situation had occurred by accident. Later he discovered that it had been planned intentionally. The teacher had arranged desks in alternating boy and girl order in order to reduce mischief and distractions among the students.

Though the strategy made sense from the teacher's perspective, it left Steven feeling surrounded in a way that he found somewhat embarrassing.

Yet the moment also illustrated a subtle lesson about humility. Repeating a grade and adjusting to a new environment required a willingness to accept circumstances that might not match personal expectations.

Humility is one of the virtues frequently emphasized in Scripture. The apostle Peter wrote, *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time"* (First Peter 5:6, KJV). Humility often begins with accepting situations that challenge personal pride.

The repeated fourth grade year eventually proved beneficial in ways that were not immediately obvious. Being slightly older and more developed physically allowed him to participate more confidently in classroom activities and social interactions.

What had initially felt like a setback gradually revealed itself as an opportunity for growth.

Throughout this season the lessons of homeschooling continued to influence his thinking. Learning had not been limited to textbooks. It had included physical skills, creative exploration, and hands on experiences.

Those early encounters with computers would later prove particularly significant. Technology would eventually become an important tool in his ministry, allowing sermons and teachings to reach audiences far beyond the walls of a church building. Yet at that moment it was simply a fascinating machine that allowed children to explore games and educational programs.

Childhood rarely provides a clear view of the future. Experiences that appear ordinary at the time sometimes become stepping stones toward unexpected destinations.

For Steven the homeschooling year represented such a stepping stone. It reinforced perseverance through physical exercises. It sparked curiosity through technology. It introduced humility through the decision to repeat a grade.

Most importantly it continued strengthening the spiritual foundation that had already begun forming within his heart.

The Bible describes wisdom as something that grows gradually through experience and instruction. Proverbs declares, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"* (Proverbs 9:10, KJV). True wisdom emerges when knowledge and faith come together.

As Steven moved forward into the next stage of childhood, the combination of curiosity, resilience, and spiritual grounding continued to shape his character.

The boy who practiced cartwheels in the living room, explored pioneer trails on early computers, and learned humility through repeated lessons was slowly becoming someone who would one day stand before congregations explaining the truths of Scripture.

Yet those future moments of preaching and leadership were still far ahead.

For now, the journey continued through the unpredictable adventures of childhood, where each experience carried the potential to shape a life that God was quietly preparing for something greater.

Chapter 4

ADVENTURE, BICYCLES, AND IMAGINATION

Childhood possesses a unique kind of freedom that often fades as the responsibilities of adulthood begin to accumulate. There is a season in life when afternoons stretch endlessly, when imagination turns ordinary places into landscapes of adventure, and when the world feels wide open to exploration. For Steven Anderson, those years were filled with movement, curiosity, and the simple joys of being a boy growing up in an era when children spent much of their time outdoors.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, much of his life unfolded beyond the walls of school buildings and family homes. Streets, empty lots, and newly developing neighborhoods became the stage for daily adventures. These experiences did not simply provide entertainment. They quietly shaped independence, creativity, and confidence.

At the center of many of those childhood adventures was a bicycle.

For Steven and his friends, BMX bikes were more than a mode of transportation. They were instruments of freedom. A bicycle meant the ability to travel beyond the boundaries of one's own yard. It meant exploring neighborhoods, visiting friends, and discovering places that felt new and exciting.

Most days began with the simple act of climbing onto a bike and pedaling down the street. The neighborhood soon became a playground filled with possibilities.

Because Steven's parents frequently purchased newly constructed homes, the family often lived in areas where development was still underway. Construction sites surrounded many of the houses in these neighborhoods. For builders these unfinished structures represented work in progress. For young boys with active imaginations, they became places of endless adventure.

When the construction crews left for the day, silence settled over the building sites. Stacks of wood, scattered boards, and open frameworks of houses remained behind. To adult eyes these materials might have appeared like ordinary building supplies. To children they were the ingredients for creativity.

Steven and his friends would gather pieces of plywood, boards, and other leftover scraps. These materials became the foundation for homemade bicycle ramps.

Constructing a ramp required experimentation. The angle had to be just right. The boards had to be sturdy enough to support the weight of a rider moving at high speed. The boys worked together, adjusting their creations until they felt confident enough to attempt a jump.

Once the ramp was ready, the excitement truly began.

A rider would pedal rapidly toward the ramp, gaining as much speed as possible. The front wheel would climb the wooden surface, and for a brief moment both rider and bicycle would lift into the air before landing on the ground beyond.

Sometimes the landing went smoothly. Other times it did not.

Scraped knees and road rash were common outcomes of these experiments. Yet even the occasional crash rarely discouraged the young riders. The thrill of attempting a new jump outweighed the discomfort of a fall.

Looking back years later, those moments revealed something deeper than childhood play. They reflected the spirit of courage that often characterizes youth. Children frequently attempt things that adults might hesitate to try. Their willingness to take risks becomes part of the learning process.

The Bible itself speaks about courage in a spiritual sense. When the Lord instructed Joshua as he prepared to lead the people of Israel, He said, *"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"* (Joshua 1:9, KJV). Though the context involved leadership and faith, the principle reminds believers that courage often precedes growth.

For Steven and his friends, building ramps and launching bicycles into the air represented a childlike version of that courage. It was not about reckless behavior. It was about discovering what was possible through experimentation and determination.

The construction sites offered more than materials for ramps. The partially built houses themselves became the setting for imaginative games.

Many of the homes were nothing more than wooden frames at that stage of construction. Walls had not yet been completed. Windows and doors had not yet been installed. Open spaces allowed children to move freely through rooms that had not yet been fully defined.

Armed with toy guns, Steven and his friends turned those unfinished houses into battlefields of imagination.

They would sneak through the open frames, crouching behind wooden beams and peering around corners as if they were soldiers navigating dangerous territory. Every hallway became a strategic pathway. Every room became a potential hiding place.

The games often involved elaborate storylines created spontaneously by the children themselves. One moment they

were explorers defending a frontier outpost. The next moment they were heroes rescuing hostages or protecting a secret base.

Imagination has always been one of childhood's greatest gifts. It allows children to transform ordinary surroundings into extraordinary adventures.

In many ways creativity reflects a small glimpse of the creativity of God Himself. The opening chapter of the Bible describes the creation of the world with remarkable beauty and diversity. Mountains, oceans, forests, animals, and stars all emerged from the imagination and power of the Creator.

The psalmist celebrated that creative power with these words. *"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches"* (Psalm 104:24, KJV).

While children constructing imaginary battles in unfinished houses may seem far removed from the grandeur of creation, their creativity reflects a small echo of that divine gift.

Beyond the construction sites, neighborhood friendships played an important role in Steven's childhood. Friends from nearby homes often joined him in daily adventures. Among them were the Fabila brothers, who lived down the street and frequently spent time riding bikes and exploring the area.

Cousins also became part of these experiences during summer visits. When relatives came to stay with the family, the neighborhood suddenly felt even more alive with activity.

Together they rode bicycles, played games, and explored every corner of their surroundings. The days were often filled with laughter, friendly competition, and occasional disagreements that were quickly forgotten.

Those friendships created memories that would last long after childhood ended.

Scripture often emphasizes the value of companionship. The book of Ecclesiastes contains a simple yet powerful observation about friendship. *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9, KJV).

For young boys navigating the adventures of childhood, companionship made every activity more enjoyable.

During several summers Steven and his friends developed a routine that became one of the most memorable traditions of those years.

Early in the morning, usually around nine o'clock, they would gather with their bicycles and ride toward a nearby shopping center. The journey itself was part of the adventure. Pedaling

through the streets, racing one another, and joking along the way made the trip exciting even before they reached their destination.

Their first stop was outside a restaurant called Round Table Pizza.

The boys would stand outside the large window of the restaurant looking inside. The tables were empty. The kitchen staff had not yet begun preparing meals. The doors remained locked.

The reason was simple.

The restaurant did not open until eleven o'clock.

Looking back later in life, Steven would laugh about the oddity of that habit. There was no practical reason to arrive so early. Yet at the time the ritual carried its own sense of anticipation.

After spending a few minutes peering through the window, the boys would walk next door to another store in the shopping center. The store was called Pay Less Drugstore.

Inside the store there was a small section devoted to books and magazines. For children who loved reading and humor, that section became an irresistible destination.

The boys would sit on the lower shelves while flipping through collections of comic strips.

Among their favorites were the beloved characters created by Charles Schulz in the Charlie Brown series. The gentle humor and thoughtful observations of those comic strips often made readers smile while quietly reflecting on life's small struggles.

They also enjoyed reading Calvin and Hobbes, a comic strip filled with imaginative adventures involving a mischievous boy and his stuffed tiger companion. The stories captured the spirit of childhood creativity with remarkable insight.

Another favorite was The Far Side, a comic series known for its unusual and often absurd humor. The cartoons featured everything from talking animals to bizarre situations that made readers laugh at the unexpected.

The boys rarely purchased the books they read. Instead, they simply sat quietly in the store reading page after page while time slowly passed.

Their true objective was waiting for the clock to approach eleven o'clock.

By about ten forty-five they would return to stand outside the doors of Round Table Pizza. The anticipation grew as the opening time approached.

Finally, the doors would unlock, and the boys would hurry inside.

Their destination was a special children's meal known as the Merlin Meal.

The meal cost two dollars and fourteen cents after tax. For a group of young boys this price represented both a challenge and an achievement. Finding enough money to purchase the meal required creativity.

Sometimes Steven's mother provided the money. At other times he searched through couch cushions or under car seats hoping to find loose coins. Occasionally he saved portions of his allowance until he had collected the necessary amount.

Because the boys hoped to repeat this outing several times each week, obtaining the two dollars and fourteen cents became part of the adventure itself.

Once inside the restaurant they would place their orders at the counter.

The Merlin Meal included a small personal pizza along with stickers and a souvenir cup. Steven often chose ham as the topping for his pizza while one of his friends preferred pepperoni.

After receiving their meals, the boys would sit at a table enjoying what felt like a feast.

Unlimited soda refills added to the excitement. For children accustomed to simple snacks at home, the ability to drink as much soda as they wanted felt like a rare luxury.

Sometimes they even had a few extra coins left over. When that happened, they would walk over to the jukebox in the restaurant and select a song to play.

Music would fill the room while they ate their pizzas and talked about the adventures of the day.

These moments may seem simple when viewed through the lens of adulthood. Yet they represent the beauty of childhood freedom.

The boys were not burdened by the responsibilities that would eventually come later in life. They were simply enjoying the world around them with curiosity and enthusiasm.

The Bible encourages believers to appreciate the blessings of life even in ordinary moments. In Ecclesiastes we read, *"Every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God"* (Ecclesiastes 3:13, KJV).

Though the boys in Round Table Pizza had not labored in the same sense described in that verse, the spirit of gratitude still applied. Simple joys such as sharing a meal with friends reflect the goodness of God's provision.

For Steven Anderson those childhood adventures formed a foundation of independence and creativity.

Riding bicycles through developing neighborhoods taught him confidence. Building ramps from construction materials encouraged problem solving and teamwork. Exploring unfinished houses stimulated imagination. Summer routines with friends created lasting memories.

Each experience contributed something valuable to the development of character.

Childhood freedom allowed creativity to flourish. Independence encouraged responsibility. Friendships strengthened social skills.

Those years were not merely a collection of playful memories. They were part of the preparation for the life that would follow.

The boy pedaling a BMX bicycle through quiet neighborhoods could not yet see the future path ahead. Yet the qualities developing during those adventures would one day support the responsibilities of adulthood and ministry.

For now, however, life remained wonderfully simple.

There were bicycles to ride, friends to meet, ramps to build, comic books to read, and pizzas to enjoy.

And in the midst of those joyful moments, God was quietly shaping the life of a boy who would someday stand before congregations preaching the message of the gospel.

Chapter 5

GRANDMOTHER AND DICK'S HOUSE

Family Influence and Memorable Lessons

Among the many places that shaped the childhood of Steven Anderson, few were as memorable or colorful as the home of his grandparents. For Steven and his siblings, visiting that house felt less like a routine family trip and more like stepping into a world filled with adventure, humor, and unforgettable personalities.

The house belonged to his grandmother and her husband Richard Tackerberry, though almost no one called him Richard. He insisted on being called simply Dick. The name may have sounded unusual to those outside the family, yet to the grandchildren it quickly became normal. When the family spoke about visiting their grandparents, they simply said they were going to see Grandmother and Dick.

The home stood in a wooded area near Grass Valley in Northern California. The surroundings were beautiful and filled with nature. Tall trees covered the land, and winding paths stretched through the forest. For children who loved exploring, the property felt almost like a private wilderness waiting to be discovered.

Whenever Steven and his siblings arrived, they knew adventure awaited them. The woods surrounding the house became a playground where imagination and curiosity guided their steps. They would spend hours running between the trees, examining plants and rocks, and exploring the quiet corners of the property.

There is something about nature that awakens a sense of wonder in the human heart. The beauty of the natural world often reminds people of the greatness of the One who created it. The Bible frequently reflects on this truth. The psalmist once declared, *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork"* (Psalm 19:1, KJV).

For children exploring the forests around their grandparents' home, those words came to life in simple yet powerful ways. Every tree, every breeze moving through the branches, and every quiet path seemed to whisper that the world had been carefully designed.

Yet while the surroundings of the house were fascinating, the personality of Dick himself made the place truly unforgettable.

Richard Tackerberry had lived a life filled with unusual experiences. Before retiring, he had served as a lieutenant in the Los Angeles Police Department. His years in law enforcement had given him a reputation as a tough and fearless man who was never easily intimidated.

Even after retirement, that reputation followed him.

Dick possessed a strong personality that made a lasting impression on anyone who met him. He spoke directly, acted confidently, and often displayed a boldness that bordered on legendary within the family.

At the same time, he also had a remarkable ability to learn practical skills on his own. Rather than relying on professional builders, he had personally designed and constructed the house in Grass Valley. Through determination and study, he had taught himself how to complete the project.

The result was a home unlike any other.

It was full of character, built according to his own ideas and preferences. The house did not resemble the polished designs found in modern neighborhoods. Instead, it carried the marks of a man who enjoyed doing things his own way.

Dick had also built houses for some of his children. His determination to construct homes for his family revealed both his work ethic and his devotion to those he loved.

The Bible often praises diligence and industriousness. Proverbs reminds readers of the value of hard work with these words. *"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men"* (Proverbs 22:29, KJV).

Dick embodied that spirit of diligence. When he set his mind to a project, he pursued it with determination until the work was completed.

The house itself held many small details that made visits there especially enjoyable for the grandchildren.

One of the most popular features was a refrigerator located in the garage. Unlike the refrigerator inside the kitchen, this one served a special purpose. Dick stocked it with small bottles of Martinelli's apple juice and various sodas.

For children arriving after a long drive, that refrigerator felt like a treasure chest.

The rules surrounding the drinks were simple but strict. Each child could take as many drinks as they wanted. However, if they

opened a bottle, they had to finish it completely. Leaving a drink half full was absolutely forbidden.

This rule reflected Dick's practical mindset. Waste was unacceptable. If something was taken, it had to be used fully.

Inside the house there were also plastic cups stored in the kitchen cabinets. Each cup had the name of one of the grandchildren written on the bottom with a marker. Whenever Steven visited, he knew exactly which cup belonged to him.

Small details like that may seem insignificant, yet they communicate a powerful message to children. Seeing their names written on those cups reminded them that they belonged there. The house was not simply a place they visited. It was part of their family story.

Another distinctive feature of the home was its aroma.

Whenever the children walked through the front door, they were greeted by the strong scent of garlic. Cooking with garlic was a constant practice in the household, and the fragrance filled the rooms.

Over time that smell became permanently connected with memories of visiting their grandparents. Even years later, encountering the scent of garlic could instantly bring those childhood moments back to mind.

Yet the uniqueness of Dick extended beyond the house itself.

Despite belonging to an older generation, he had developed a surprising enthusiasm for technology. In an era when many people were still unfamiliar with microwave ovens, Dick owned not just one but two.

He used them for almost everything.

Meals that most people would prepare on a stove or in an oven often found their way into his microwave instead. Cornish game hens were cooked entirely inside the microwave. Hot dogs and other foods received the same treatment.

After preparing a meal, Dick often asked a question that placed his guests in an awkward position.

He would look around the table and ask, "Is this the best thing you've ever had?"

The question demanded enthusiasm. If someone hesitated or admitted that it might not be their favorite meal ever, Dick would respond immediately.

"What's wrong with it?" he would ask.

The conversation usually produced laughter as family members attempted to answer carefully without offending him.

Yet Dick's personality also included humorous contradictions.

When someone offered him candy or desserts, he often refused with a confident declaration.

"I can't eat that stuff," he would say. "I'm an athlete."

The statement became something of a family joke. Though the claim was delivered seriously, the grandchildren often repeated it later with amusement.

Another area where Dick demonstrated remarkable skill was television technology.

During the era when programming a VCR seemed confusing to most people, Dick had mastered the process completely. In fact, he owned two VCR machines.

His strategy was simple but effective.

He disliked commercials.

Instead of watching television programs live, he recorded them all. The following day he would sit down and watch the recordings while fast forwarding through every commercial break.

The approach allowed him to enjoy his favorite shows without interruptions.

Among the programs he recorded regularly were Wheel of Fortune and Jeopardy. Mystery series such as Murder, She Wrote, Matlock, and Father Dowling Mysteries also appeared frequently in his recordings.

Dick had his own nickname for one of these shows. Because he believed the lead actress in Murder, She Wrote resembled his dog named Popo, he began referring to the program simply as Popo.

Whenever the show came on he would announce with enthusiasm, "Popo's on."

The family always knew exactly what he meant.

Yet the stories surrounding Dick extended far beyond humorous television habits.

Before retirement he had served as a police officer in Los Angeles, eventually becoming a lieutenant. His career included many dramatic experiences that contributed to his reputation as a fearless man.

In fact, his personality was so distinctive that it reportedly inspired a fictional character in the film Police Academy. The character Eugene Tackleberry shared both the name and the tough demeanor that reminded people of Dick's reputation in law enforcement circles.

Even after retirement he continued demonstrating the boldness that had characterized his career.

One incident illustrated this clearly.

While riding his motorcycle, Dick noticed a driver who appeared intoxicated at a traffic light. Rather than ignoring the situation, he rode up beside the car, reached through the open window, turned off the ignition, and removed the keys.

Later he delivered the keys to the police station and informed the driver that they could be retrieved there.

Another story involved a confrontation at a public fair. Dick noticed a man wearing a shirt that displayed offensive language. Without hesitation he approached the man and demanded that he remove the shirt or turn it inside out.

The man complied immediately.

Though such stories may seem almost unbelievable, they reflected the commanding presence that Dick carried throughout his life.

His toughness also had deep roots in his early years.

At the age of seventeen he had lied about his age in order to enlist in the military during the Second World War. He served in the

Pacific theater, fighting against Japanese forces during one of the most challenging periods in modern history.

Those experiences shaped his character profoundly.

The Bible frequently honors those who demonstrate courage and sacrifice. The words spoken by King David to his son Solomon capture this spirit. *"Be strong therefore, and shew thyself a man"* (First Kings 2:2, KJV).

Dick's life often reflected that same call to strength and determination.

Another passion he developed during his years as a police officer was boxing.

Whenever the grandchildren visited, he eagerly taught them the fundamentals of the sport. His lessons always began with the same principle.

Everything starts with the left jab.

Again and again, he explained how the left jab formed the foundation of nearly every boxing strategy. Quick, precise movements created opportunities for stronger punches.

Inside the garage he had installed a speed bag. The rhythmic tapping of the bag echoed through the space as he demonstrated techniques and encouraged the children to practice.

Though the lessons were playful, they also emphasized discipline and focus.

Yet perhaps one of the most memorable stories from visits to Grandmother and Dick's house involved a trip to Taco Bell.

One day Dick picked up Steven, his siblings, and several cousins in Sacramento to take them to his home in Grass Valley. During the drive he announced something that immediately excited the children.

They would stop at Taco Bell.

When they arrived, Dick made an extraordinary offer.

The children could order anything they wanted.

Tacos, burritos, nachos, desserts. They could eat as much food as they desired.

However, there was one unusual rule.

They were not allowed to order anything to drink.

Though confused by the restriction, the children eagerly began ordering food. Plate after plate of salty tacos and burritos disappeared as they devoured their meals.

When they finished eating, they climbed back into the car and began the nearly hour-long drive to their grandparents' house.

It did not take long for the effect of the meal to become obvious.

The children were desperately thirsty.

By the time they arrived at the house they rushed inside hoping to find something to drink.

Waiting for them on the table was a large bowl of freshly prepared punch made by their grandmother.

The thirsty children drank eagerly, declaring how delicious the punch tasted.

Only afterward did they discover Dick's clever plan.

Their grandmother had been worried that the children might not like the punch she had prepared. Dick had deliberately ensured they would arrive extremely thirsty so that they would enjoy it and make her feel appreciated.

The story captured something important about his personality. Beneath the toughness and boldness there existed a genuine affection for his family.

Yet while Dick's personality dominated many memories, Steven's grandmother represented a different kind of influence.

She was a devoted Christian whose faith quietly shaped the atmosphere of the home.

Every morning she read her Bible faithfully.

Her devotion to Scripture created a powerful example for the grandchildren who visited. Sometimes Steven woke early and joined her while she read.

On one occasion she noticed something interesting in the back of his Bible.

Steven had written a list of verses there.

Curious about the list, she asked him what it contained.

The passages were mostly strong doctrinal statements that he had been collecting. Many dealt with subjects such as eternal punishment and warnings against alcohol.

After looking through the list she gently offered advice.

Her concern was not that the verses were wrong. Instead, she encouraged him to develop a more balanced perspective by studying the full range of biblical teaching.

Her wisdom reflected the heart of a teacher who understood that Scripture contains many themes.

The apostle Paul described the importance of studying the whole counsel of God when he wrote, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (Second Timothy 3:16, KJV).

Steven's grandmother wanted him to appreciate the richness of Scripture in its entirety.

Though Dick did not initially share her strong faith, her influence remained steady throughout their years together.

Near the end of his life Dick eventually became a Christian and was baptized. Afterward he expressed regret that he had not attended church with her more often while she was still alive.

Her quiet example had left a mark that endured long after her lifetime.

For young Steven, the visits to their home in Grass Valley created a collection of memories filled with humor, adventure, and wisdom.

There were forests to explore, drinks waiting in the garage refrigerator, and television shows recorded on VCR tapes. There were boxing lessons in the garage and stories about war and law enforcement.

There were nicknames invented for nearly every family member and clever plans designed to make children appreciate a bowl of punch.

Yet beyond the colorful stories stood something deeper.

Through the personalities of both grandparents, he witnessed strength, determination, faith, and love expressed in different ways.

Those influences would remain with him long after childhood ended.

The boy who once wandered through the woods around his grandparents' home would carry those lessons into adulthood, where they would shape the character of a man preparing for a life devoted to faith and ministry.

Chapter 6

SKILLS, MUSIC, AND THE DESERT ADVENTURE

Early Talents and Memorable Experiences

Childhood is often the season when abilities begin to surface quietly. Some talents appear gradually through curiosity and practice, while others are discovered through unexpected experiences. For Steven Anderson, the years of his late childhood and early adolescence became a time of exploration in many directions. Music began to draw his attention. Technology fascinated him. Outdoor adventures tested his courage. Along the way, lessons about discipline, balance, and faith began to shape the person he was becoming.

The journey toward one of his earliest skills began with a simple instrument that sat quietly in the home. The piano.

Music had always been present in many Christian homes. Hymns, church music, and gospel songs formed part of the atmosphere in which Steven was raised. Yet learning to play an instrument required patience and dedication. Formal lessons were expensive, and for a family already investing heavily in Christian education, adding another weekly expense required careful consideration.

Still, Steven felt drawn toward the instrument.

Rather than waiting for formal instruction, he began teaching himself. His mother purchased instructional books from a local music store, and those books became his teachers. Page by page he studied the notes, the rhythms, and the patterns of chords that formed the foundation of piano playing.

The process required determination. Self-instruction does not offer the immediate feedback of a teacher sitting beside the student. Mistakes must be discovered and corrected through persistence. Yet the challenge itself often strengthens the learner.

Day after day he practiced, slowly translating the black dots on the page into music that filled the room. Simple melodies came

first. Gradually the pieces became more complex. The sound of the piano became part of the rhythm of daily life within the home.

The Bible frequently connects music with worship and devotion. The psalmist wrote, *"Sing unto the Lord with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God"* (Psalm 147:7, KJV). Throughout Scripture music appears as a language of praise and reflection.

Though Steven could not yet see how his musical interest might one day serve ministry, the discipline of learning an instrument was already shaping habits of focus and perseverance.

Eventually his parents noticed the seriousness with which he approached the piano. Though finances were still limited, they arranged a compromise with a piano teacher. Instead of weekly lessons, he would attend three times each month at a reduced cost.

The arrangement allowed him to receive professional instruction while still respecting the family's financial limitations. With guidance from a teacher his skills developed further. Concepts that once seemed confusing began to make sense. Finger movements became smoother. Music that once felt impossible slowly became achievable.

The experience reinforced an important principle about growth. Talent may spark interest, but disciplined practice transforms interest into ability.

Scripture often celebrates diligence. Proverbs offers a powerful reminder of the rewards that accompany effort. *"The hand of the diligent shall bear rule"* (Proverbs 12:24, KJV).

For Steven, learning the piano became one of the first examples of how patience and discipline can unlock potential.

Yet music was not the only new interest capturing his attention during those years.

The world of video games was also beginning to expand rapidly, and like many young people of his generation, Steven found himself drawn into that new form of entertainment.

The family's first system was an Atari console, one of the earliest home gaming devices available at the time. The system was simple by modern standards. A joystick controller with a single button allowed players to navigate pixelated worlds displayed on the television screen.

Despite the simplicity of the technology, the experience felt exciting and futuristic.

Later the family upgraded to the Nintendo Entertainment System, which quickly became one of the most popular gaming systems of the era. With its arrival came a new collection of games that captured the imagination of children across the country.

Steven spent many hours playing titles that would become iconic among gamers. Super Mario Bros invited players into colorful landscapes filled with hidden passages and challenging obstacles. Contra required quick reflexes and precise timing. Role playing adventures such as Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior introduced players to expansive fantasy worlds filled with quests and battles.

These games demanded concentration and persistence. Levels often required multiple attempts before success was achieved.

One particularly amusing memory involved Steven's father attempting to play Super Mario Bros for the first time.

After picking up the controller and guiding Mario into the game world, his father quickly encountered the very first enemy. Within moments the character was defeated.

Frustrated by the sudden loss, he placed the controller down and declared the game to be foolish. That brief attempt ended his interest in playing.

However, another game eventually captured his attention.

Duck Hunt.

Unlike most games that used a traditional controller, Duck Hunt required players to aim a light gun at the television screen and shoot at flying ducks. The interactive nature of the game appealed to Steven's father, and he occasionally joined in the fun.

Yet even enjoyable activities require moderation.

At one point Steven spent so much time playing video games that he developed a nervous tic. His grandfather Dick Tackerberry believed the habit resulted from excessive gaming and encouraged him to reduce the amount of time he spent with the system.

When Steven cut back on his gaming, the tic gradually disappeared.

The experience left a lasting impression about balance in life.

The Bible repeatedly warns about allowing any activity to become excessive. The apostle Paul wrote, *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient"* (First Corinthians 6:12, KJV). The verse reminds believers that even permissible activities must be approached with wisdom and moderation.

Learning that lesson early in life helped Steven understand the importance of self-control.

While music and games occupied time at home, another interest was developing outside the house.

That interest involved engines, dirt, and speed.

Steven's father loved riding dirt bikes, and eventually he introduced his son to the same activity.

The first experience did not go smoothly.

While practicing in the small backyard of their home, Steven lost control of the bike and crashed directly through a wooden fence. The impact left a hole in the fence and caused a painful accident that neither he nor his father would soon forget.

For a man who was an experienced motorcycle rider, the incident did not inspire great confidence.

Yet improvement came gradually.

With practice Steven learned how to control the machine more effectively. Balance, throttle control, and awareness of terrain became part of the learning process.

Soon the father and son began traveling together to ride through desert trails.

These trips became some of the most memorable experiences of Steven's youth.

The desert environment presented both beauty and challenge. Wide open landscapes stretched across the horizon. Trails twisted through sand washes and rocky terrain. The heat of the sun pressed down during the day, while the nights could become bitterly cold.

Riding through such terrain required skill and endurance.

Steven's father was an exceptional rider who loved difficult trails. Often, he rode ahead of the group and stopped periodically to drink from his canteen or eat a granola bar while waiting for the others to catch up.

Yet the moment the younger riders arrived, hoping for a rest, he would signal that it was time to continue.

Though exhausting, the rides provided valuable time together. The long drives to the desert and the hours spent navigating trails created opportunities for conversation and bonding between father and son.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of relationships between fathers and children. Proverbs teaches, *"The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice"* (Proverbs 23:24, KJV). Shared experiences often strengthen those relationships in ways that words alone cannot accomplish.

One small detail from those trips remained especially memorable.

Steven's father carried two canteens during their rides. One contained cold Diet Coke. The other held warm water.

As a child Steven disliked the taste of Diet Coke. That left him with an unusual choice whenever he needed a drink.

He could drink warm water, which was not very refreshing under the desert sun, or he could drink cold soda that he did not enjoy.

Most of the time he chose the water. Yet occasionally the intense heat persuaded him to drink the soda simply because it was cold.

These small details became part of the tapestry of memories connected with those trips.

Yet among all the desert adventures, one experience stood above the rest.

It was an incident that could easily have ended in tragedy.

During one trip to the Nevada desert near a place called Johnson Lane, Steven was riding with two other children while exploring the trails. Early in the morning they set out to travel across the landscape on their motorcycles.

At one point the group faced a decision about which direction to take in order to return to their campsite.

Steven believed one path was correct. The other boys insisted on taking a different route.

Confident in his judgment, he initially separated from them and followed the path he believed was right.

Soon afterward doubt crept into his mind. The desert stretched endlessly around him, and the isolation of the terrain began to feel unsettling.

Realizing it might be dangerous to remain alone, he quickly started his motorcycle and attempted to catch up with the others by following the dust trails left by their bikes.

Unfortunately, he missed a turn.

Within moments the dust disappeared, leaving him alone in the vast desert.

He chose a direction and began riding, hoping to rediscover the path that would lead him back to camp. Hours passed as he traveled across the barren terrain.

The landscape offered few landmarks. Occasionally he followed power lines or rode toward distant buildings that appeared on the

horizon. Yet many of those structures turned out to be abandoned barns or empty sheds.

As the afternoon progressed, fear began to grow.

Steven carried no survival equipment. His clothing was designed for daytime riding rather than cold desert nights. The previous evening, he had slept in the back of a pickup truck beneath a camper shell with a small propane heater running. Even with that heater their water bottles had frozen during the night.

Remembering the bitter cold, he realized the seriousness of his situation.

If darkness arrived while he was still lost, survival would become uncertain.

The Bible often describes moments when individuals face overwhelming circumstances. In such times faith becomes a source of strength. The psalmist wrote, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble"* (Psalm 46:1, KJV).

Though Steven was still young, the experience reminded him of the importance of trusting God during moments of uncertainty.

After hours of wandering through the desert, he finally spotted another motorcyclist approaching.

The rider was a teenager named Fritz.

Relief flooded through him as he explained that he was lost and needed help returning to Johnson Lane. Fritz agreed to guide him back.

Yet another problem remained.

Steven's fuel tank was nearly empty.

He asked whether he could siphon gasoline from Fritz's motorcycle. Instead, Fritz suggested they simply ride together and promised to assist if the fuel ran out.

As they approached the settlement near Johnson Lane, Fritz stopped at a house to visit someone he knew.

Expecting the stop to last only a few minutes, Steven followed him inside.

However, the homeowner began sharing stories about a party that had taken place the previous night. The conversation continued for more than an hour.

While the others talked, Steven grew increasingly anxious. He imagined his father searching for him across the desert and possibly contacting authorities.

Yet he felt uncomfortable interrupting the conversation or insisting they leave, especially since Fritz had just helped him find the way back.

Finally, they returned to their motorcycles and continued toward the campsite.

As the sun began to sink toward the horizon, Steven finally rode into camp.

He had been gone nearly eight hours.

In an astonishing twist of timing, he passed his father just as the man was preparing to lead a search party to find him. Only minutes earlier his father had learned that he was missing.

Had the rescue come any later, the outcome might have been very different.

The experience left a deep impression.

It reminded him that life can shift suddenly from confidence to uncertainty. One wrong turn can place a person in unfamiliar territory.

Yet it also demonstrated the providence of God.

Just when the situation seemed most hopeless, a rider named Fritz appeared on the horizon.

Scripture often reflects on such moments of divine provision. The book of Proverbs offers a simple yet powerful promise. *"In all*

thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6, KJV).

For Steven Anderson, the desert adventure became one of the most unforgettable experiences of his youth.

It combined the thrill of exploration with the sobering realization that life sometimes hangs on unexpected moments of help.

The boy who once practiced piano in the living room, played games on early video systems, and rode motorcycles across desert trails was gradually learning lessons that would shape his future.

Some lessons came through discipline. Others arrived through excitement or fear.

Yet through each experience, faith continued to grow quietly within his heart.

Chapter 7

SEVENTH GRADE TRIALS AND DISCIPLINE

A Difficult School Environment

There are seasons in life that feel comfortable and encouraging, and there are seasons that test the strength of a person's character. Often the most valuable growth occurs during the moments that feel difficult. Challenges have a way of revealing inner strength that might otherwise remain hidden. For Steven Anderson, seventh grade became one of those defining seasons.

Up to that point his childhood had already included many changes. Schools had come and gone, friendships had shifted, and environments had constantly required adjustment. Yet nothing quite prepared him for the particular challenges that

would arise when his family returned to Citadel Baptist Church in Sacramento, California.

When the Anderson family returned to the church, Steven enrolled once again in the school connected to the congregation. However, something about the school had changed.

Previously it had been a small school designed primarily for the children of church members. The environment had been modest and closely connected to the church community. By the time Steven entered seventh grade, however, the school had expanded and adopted a new name. It was now called Citadel Christian School.

The change was not merely a matter of a new title. The school had opened its doors to students from the surrounding neighborhood in order to increase enrollment and provide financial stability. The area around the school was part of South Sacramento, which had gradually developed a reputation for social difficulties and economic hardship.

As a result, many of the new students arriving at the school came from troubled backgrounds. Some had previously been expelled from public schools. Others struggled with discipline or carried personal problems that followed them into the classroom.

For parents who had hoped Christian education would provide a peaceful alternative to the challenges of public schools, the situation created an unexpected tension.

Steven quickly sensed the difference.

The social environment of the school felt rough and unpredictable. Conflicts between students occurred frequently. The atmosphere sometimes carried a sense of unrest rather than the calm environment many people expect from a Christian institution.

For a young teenager navigating the already confusing years of early adolescence, the environment could feel overwhelming.

Yet Steven rarely complained about the situation to his parents.

His family was making a financial sacrifice in order to keep him enrolled in the school. He knew that paying tuition required careful budgeting and dedication from his parents. Because of that sacrifice, he chose to endure the difficulties quietly rather than burden them with complaints.

That decision itself revealed something important about his character. Even at a young age he possessed a sense of responsibility and awareness of the efforts his parents were making for his education.

Scripture often emphasizes the value of honoring parents and recognizing their sacrifices. The book of Ephesians instructs young people with these words. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother"* (Ephesians 6:1 and 2, KJV).

Though Steven may not have consciously quoted those verses during that time, the spirit of honoring his parents influenced the way he responded to the challenges around him.

Despite the difficult social atmosphere, one aspect of the school would leave a lasting mark on him.

The academic expectations of one particular teacher.

Her name was Mrs. Khan.

Mrs. Khan was known throughout the school for her strict standards. She demanded serious effort from her students and refused to lower her expectations simply because an assignment seemed difficult.

To many students her classroom felt intimidating.

Yet within that demanding environment lay an opportunity for growth.

One particular assignment during the year became legendary among the students who experienced it.

Mrs. Khan introduced the class to a study of scientific discoveries spanning several centuries. The material included major breakthroughs from the seventeenth century through the twentieth century. Each discovery was associated with the scientist responsible for it and the year in which it occurred.

To help students organize the information, she provided them with a large chart listing the discoveries alongside the scientists and dates.

The assignment required the students to study the chart carefully.

Eventually the time came for the test.

Many students assumed the exam would follow a familiar pattern. Perhaps it would involve multiple choice questions or short written responses. Maybe the teacher would ask them to identify a few discoveries from the chart.

Instead, Mrs. Khan introduced a test that stunned the class.

The students would be given only the years.

Next to each year they would need to write the name of the scientist and the discovery associated with it.

In other words, they were expected to reproduce the entire chart from memory.

The assignment seemed overwhelming.

The classroom filled with nervous tension as the students attempted to recall the information they had studied. For many of them the task proved far more difficult than they had anticipated.

When the tests were returned, the results confirmed the challenge.

Nearly the entire class had failed.

Steven himself scored forty three percent.

For students accustomed to teachers who softened difficult assignments or adjusted grading curves, the moment carried a heavy sense of disappointment. Many assumed the teacher would eventually correct the situation by raising the grades.

The following day Mrs. Khan addressed the class.

She acknowledged the poor performance but made her expectations clear. The grades would not be adjusted. Instead, the students would retake the same test the following week.

Their final grade would be the average of both attempts.

The announcement created a mixture of frustration and determination among the students.

For Steven the situation carried particular urgency.

Even if he scored a perfect one hundred on the retake, the average of the two tests would still leave him barely passing under the school's grading standards.

Yet instead of accepting defeat, he decided to approach the challenge with renewed effort.

For the next week he devoted himself to memorizing the entire chart.

Line by line he studied the names of scientists and the discoveries associated with each year. Repetition became the key to mastering the material. He reviewed the information again and again until the connections between dates, names, and discoveries became clear in his mind.

The process required discipline.

Memorization is rarely exciting. It demands concentration and persistence. Yet the experience demonstrated the power of focused effort.

The Bible frequently encourages believers to pursue diligence in all areas of life. The apostle Paul wrote, *"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men"* (Colossians 3:23, KJV).

Though Paul was speaking about work and service, the principle also applies to study. When a person approaches responsibilities with wholehearted effort, growth becomes possible.

When the day of the retest arrived, Steven sat down once again to face the same chart.

This time the results were very different.

He scored one hundred percent.

Although the average of the two tests still limited his overall grade, the achievement represented something far more important than a number written on paper.

It demonstrated the power of perseverance.

The experience also reshaped his attitude toward academic challenges. After enduring such a demanding assignment, many other school tasks seemed far easier by comparison.

Later in life he would reflect that the discipline required during that year made the rest of his schooling feel almost simple.

Scripture often highlights the value of perseverance through difficulty. The apostle James wrote, *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience"* (James 1:2 and 3, KJV).

In this context the word temptations refer to trials or tests. The passage reminds believers that challenges produce endurance.

Though memorizing scientific discoveries might seem like a small trial compared to the hardships described in Scripture, the principle remains the same.

Difficult tasks develop discipline.

Discipline builds character.

Character prepares individuals for greater responsibilities.

The 7th grade year therefore became a season of growth that extended beyond textbooks and examinations.

The social environment of the school required emotional resilience. The academic expectations demanded perseverance. Both experiences contributed to the development of qualities that would serve Steven throughout his life.

Another aspect of the year also added an unexpected chapter to his story.

For the first time he participated in organized sports.

Citadel Christian School grouped students from seventh through twelfth grade together for athletic activities. Because of that

structure Steven was able to join the junior varsity basketball team even though he was among the youngest participants.

Basketball had not previously been a major focus in his life. He admitted openly that he was not particularly skilled at the sport. Nevertheless, he approached the opportunity with enthusiasm.

The practices proved extremely demanding.

On the very first day the players were required to run repeated wind sprints across the gymnasium floor. The intensity of the drills pushed many of the students beyond their limits.

Several players became physically sick from exhaustion.

The locker room filled with tired athletes attempting to recover from the grueling conditioning session.

Yet Steven continued attending practice faithfully.

Despite his effort, however, he spent most games sitting on the bench watching older players take the court.

During the second game of the season, he was finally given an opportunity to play.

The moment lasted only about a minute.

Soon afterward circumstances changed again.

A financial recession affected the family's situation, and his mother accepted a job at a department store called JCPenney. Until that time she had been a full-time homemaker, but the new job introduced scheduling challenges.

Because basketball practice required time after school, Steven was no longer able to participate.

Thus, his entire sports career concluded after one brief appearance in a single game.

Though short lived, the experience provided another reminder that effort does not always guarantee visible success. Sometimes the value of an activity lies in the discipline it develops rather than the recognition it brings.

The Bible often emphasizes the importance of faithfulness rather than public achievement. Jesus taught, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much"* (Luke 16:10, KJV).

The lessons of seventh grade therefore extended far beyond memorized charts or athletic practices.

They involved patience, perseverance, humility, and determination.

The difficult environment of the school forced Steven to develop resilience. The demanding expectations of Mrs. Khan taught him

discipline. Even the brief experience with basketball revealed the importance of effort regardless of outcome.

Looking back later in life, the year that once seemed harsh and uncomfortable would appear differently.

It had been a training ground.

The challenges that once caused frustration had quietly built the strength needed for the future.

The boy who struggled through memorization charts and intense classroom expectations was slowly developing the discipline that would later support years of preaching, study, and leadership.

Through trials both large and small, character was being formed.

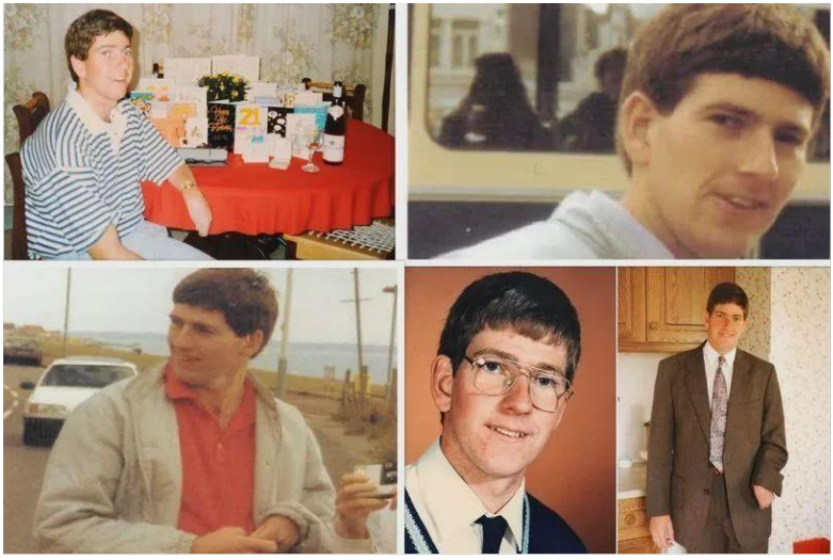
And as Scripture reminds us, God often uses such seasons to prepare individuals for the work that lies ahead. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth"* (Hebrews 12:6, KJV).

Even in the trials of seventh grade, the shaping hand of God was quietly at work.

Chapter 8

HIGH SCHOOL CHALLENGES AND AWAKENING CONVICTIONS

Doctrinal Questions and Spiritual Growth



The teenage years often represent a crossroads in a person's life. During childhood many beliefs are accepted without question because they are taught by parents, pastors, and teachers. Yet as a young person grows older, the mind begins to examine those beliefs more carefully. Questions arise. Observations are made. Convictions begin to form through personal study and reflection.

For Steven Anderson, the years of high school became a season when faith moved from simple acceptance toward deeper

understanding. Experiences during that period forced him to think seriously about doctrine, character, and the difference between outward religion and genuine biblical conviction.

After completing seventh grade at Citadel Christian School, Steven approached his parents with a request. Though he had endured the year quietly, the environment of the school had been difficult. The social climate, the struggles among students, and the general atmosphere left him uneasy.

He explained to his parents that he would prefer not to return there for the following year.

His parents listened carefully. They had always been deeply committed to providing their children with the best possible upbringing. Education was not simply about academics in their view. It also involved moral influence and spiritual development.

After considering the situation, they decided to transfer Steven to another school.

The new school was Victory Christian School.

From the beginning the change felt refreshing. Compared with the tensions he had experienced the previous year, the new environment seemed calmer and more welcoming. The teachers appeared encouraging, the students seemed more relaxed, and the

atmosphere created a sense of stability that had been missing before.

For the first time in several years, school life felt enjoyable again.

Victory Christian School also maintained traditions that helped students build friendships early in the year. Shortly after classes began, the school organized a camp retreat lasting several days. Students traveled together to cabins in a scenic setting where they spent time swimming, participating in outdoor activities, eating meals together, and attending chapel services.

For many students the retreat became a highlight of the year. The relaxed environment allowed them to form friendships outside the classroom while listening to preaching and devotional messages.

Steven enjoyed the experience and quickly felt more connected to the community.

Yet the new school also introduced certain challenges.

One of those challenges involved the distance from home.

Unlike Citadel Christian School, which had been relatively close to the Anderson household, Victory Christian School required a much longer commute. The drive took more than thirty minutes each way.

Because of the distance, Steven participated in a carpool arrangement with another student. The daily schedule required him to leave home early each morning, often around 6:45.

The carpool route included a stop at the other student's house before continuing toward the school.

Classes usually ended around three o'clock in the afternoon, yet the students were not picked up immediately. The driver's work schedule required them to wait until approximately five fifteen.

As a result, Steven frequently returned home close to six o'clock in the evening.

The routine meant that more than eleven hours of each day were spent away from home.

Surprisingly, he did not resent the long schedule.

Several other students faced similar circumstances, which created an informal group that spent the hours after school together. They talked, relaxed, completed homework, and shared stories about their lives.

The extended time together strengthened friendships in ways that might not have occurred during ordinary school days.

Scripture frequently emphasizes the importance of companionship and shared encouragement. The book of

Ecclesiastes reminds readers, *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9, KJV).

The friendships formed during those long afternoons provided support and camaraderie during the formative years of adolescence.

Another part of Steven's life during that period involved athletics.

While attending Citadel Christian School he had briefly joined the junior varsity basketball team. The experience had been short lived because his mother's work schedule eventually made it impossible for him to continue attending practice.

Even though his sports career had lasted only a short time, the experience had revealed something about perseverance and effort. He had approached the opportunity with enthusiasm even though he recognized that his natural ability in basketball was limited.

Participating in practices, running exhausting drills, and waiting patiently for a chance to play had taught him valuable lessons about humility and commitment.

The Bible often reminds believers that life itself resembles a race requiring endurance. The apostle Paul wrote, *"Know ye not that*

they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain" (First Corinthians 9:24, KJV).

Although Steven's athletic participation ended early, the discipline required in sports paralleled the spiritual discipline that would later become important in ministry.

As the years at Victory Christian School progressed, however, Steven began to notice things that troubled him deeply.

The concerns did not emerge immediately. At first the environment appeared positive compared with his previous school. Yet over time certain contradictions became difficult to ignore.

One incident involved several students within his circle of friends.

These friends attended a party where they experimented with marijuana. Eventually the situation came to the attention of school authorities, and disciplinary action followed.

For Steven the news was shocking.

Like many teenagers he had occasionally participated in harmless pranks or minor mischief. Yet the idea of using drugs crossed a line that he considered morally serious.

What troubled him even more was the way the school handled the situation.

According to the student handbook, the offense carried severe consequences. Expulsion was listed among the possible disciplinary measures. Students involved in such behavior could also lose the privilege of participating in extracurricular activities.

Steven knew these rules well because he had carefully read the handbook.

At the beginning of each school year, he developed a habit of studying the rulebook thoroughly. His mother sometimes teased him about this habit. She suspected he might be studying the rules to discover how far he could push boundaries without getting into trouble.

Though the comment was made humorously, there was some truth behind it.

Steven believed that understanding the system was important. Knowing the rules allowed a person to navigate situations wisely.

However, when the students involved in the drug incident received only a short suspension before returning to school activities, the decision seemed inconsistent with the written policies.

One particular student had allegedly been the person who brought the drugs to the party and encouraged others to participate. Yet the consequences appeared minimal.

Rumors circulated that the student's father served on the school's board.

Whether the rumor was accurate or not, the situation left Steven feeling unsettled.

The apparent inconsistency suggested that rules might be applied differently depending on personal connections.

The Bible repeatedly condemns partiality and favoritism. The book of Proverbs declares, *"These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment"* (Proverbs 24:23, KJV).

Observing what seemed to be unequal treatment forced Steven to confront the uncomfortable reality that even institutions claiming Christian values sometimes struggle to apply those values consistently.

Another troubling moment occurred when a fellow student approached him with a VHS tape.

The tape contained pornography.

The student offered it casually, as though sharing such material were normal among teenagers.

Steven refused immediately.

Nevertheless, the encounter left him bewildered.

The presence of such behavior within a Christian school environment raised difficult questions. If a place dedicated to Christian education allowed such influences to circulate among students, what distinguished it from the world outside its walls?

The apostle Paul warned believers about the importance of moral purity. In his letter to the Thessalonians he wrote, *"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication"* (First Thessalonians 4:3, KJV).

For Steven, witnessing these contradictions stirred a deeper desire to understand what genuine Christianity should look like.

Around the same time another situation emerged that would influence his theological convictions even more strongly.

In one of his Bible classes the teacher began emphasizing a doctrine suggesting that genuine salvation required evidence of works in order to be valid.

The teaching sounded dangerously close to a system where human actions determined eternal destiny.

Steven had already begun studying Scripture seriously. From his reading he believed the Bible taught salvation by faith alone rather than by human effort.

The difference between those two ideas was enormous.

If salvation depended on works, then no one could ever feel certain of forgiveness. Human performance would always fall short of perfection.

Yet the Bible repeatedly emphasizes faith as the basis of justification before God.

One verse in particular captured Steven's attention.

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5, KJV).

The statement from the apostle Paul could hardly be clearer. The verse describes a person who does not rely on works but instead believes in the God who justifies the ungodly.

That faith is counted as righteousness.

In other words, salvation rests entirely on trusting the finished work of Christ rather than attempting to earn acceptance through human effort.

When the teacher assigned a paper addressing doctrinal questions, Steven seized the opportunity to express his convictions.

He wrote a detailed argument defending the biblical teaching of salvation by faith alone. Using Romans chapter four and other passages, he explained why justification could not depend on works.

The paper represented one of the first moments when he publicly defended a theological position based on his personal study of Scripture.

When the assignment was returned, the response surprised him.

The teacher had marked down the paper and labeled the argument as false doctrine.

For Steven the moment carried profound significance.

It was not merely a disagreement over an academic topic. It represented a fundamental question about the nature of the gospel itself.

If the Bible clearly taught salvation by faith alone, then defending that truth was not optional.

It was essential.

The apostle Paul wrote passionately about this very issue in his letter to the Galatians. *"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ"* (Galatians 2:16, KJV).

The verse affirmed exactly what Steven believed.

That realization forced him to make an important decision.

Continuing at the school would require him to remain in an environment where his understanding of the gospel was considered incorrect.

Meanwhile his parents were sacrificing significant time and money to support his education there.

After careful thought he approached them with a request.

He explained that he believed it would be better for him to finish his final two years of high school in public school.

His parents responded with surprising support.

In fact, they reminded him that attending Victory Christian School had been his own choice in the first place. They had been willing to support the decision because they wanted him to receive the education he desired.

Now they were equally willing to support a different path.

Thus, the decision was made.

Steven transferred to Woodcreek High School in Roseville, California, where he would complete his eleventh and twelfth grade years.

The change represented more than a shift in academic environment.

It marked a turning point in his spiritual development.

Through the challenges of high school, he had begun to examine faith for himself rather than relying solely on the assumptions of others.

The contradictions he observed forced him to distinguish between outward religion and genuine biblical conviction.

Most importantly the experience deepened his commitment to the doctrine of salvation by faith alone.

The words of Scripture had become personal truth rather than mere theological theory.

And as he stepped into the next chapter of life, those convictions would soon guide him toward new experiences that would shape the direction of his future ministry.

Chapter 9

PUBLIC SCHOOL AND NEW FRIENDSHIPS

Life at Woodcreek High School

Every life journey contains moments when the path ahead suddenly changes direction. Sometimes those turns come quietly through small decisions that seem ordinary at the time. Yet in retrospect they reveal themselves as significant turning points. For Steven Anderson, the decision to leave Christian school and enroll in a public high school became one of those moments.

The transition occurred during the final years of his teenage life. After wrestling with questions about doctrine and observing troubling inconsistencies in the environment of his previous school, Steven concluded that continuing there no longer served the purpose his parents had hoped it would. Rather than remain in a setting where his growing convictions were constantly in

conflict with the teaching around him, he chose to step into a different environment altogether.

Thus, he enrolled at Woodcreek High School in Roseville, California.

For many students raised in Christian schools, the thought of entering a public school can seem intimidating. Public campuses often appear larger, louder, and more socially complex than private religious institutions. The student body is usually more diverse, and the culture reflects a wider range of beliefs and lifestyles.

Yet Steven approached the change with curiosity rather than fear.

In fact, the transition held a small personal benefit that made the experience feel more comfortable. For the first time in several years, he would attend the same school as his younger sister Lisa, who had already been studying in the public system. Their shared presence created a familiar connection within the unfamiliar environment.

Lisa had often teased her older brother about one particular aspect of his personality.

Music.

Steven possessed a deep fascination with electronic music, especially the distinctive sound that had emerged during the nineteen eighties. Bands from that era captured his imagination through their unique blend of synthesizers, rhythm, and melody.

Artists such as New Order, Simple Minds, and Tears for Fears filled his playlists. Their songs carried emotional intensity combined with technological innovation, producing a style that felt both energetic and thoughtful.

Yet by the late nineteen nineties, the musical tastes of American teenagers had shifted toward different genres. Alternative rock, hip hop, and other styles dominated the cultural landscape. Lisa often insisted that Steven's preference for older European electronic music made him somewhat unusual among his peers.

"You won't find anyone at your new school who listens to that," she once told him with playful confidence.

Steven accepted the challenge with a smile, though he wondered privately whether she might be correct.

His first day at Woodcreek High School began like many first days in unfamiliar places. Students moved through crowded hallways carrying backpacks and schedules. Conversations echoed through the corridors while teachers directed students toward classrooms.

As Steven entered his first class, he looked around the room searching for an available seat.

The desk beside him was occupied by a girl whose backpack immediately caught his attention.

Sewn onto the fabric were several patches displaying the names of bands.

To his amazement, the patches represented the very artists he loved. New Order appeared alongside other electronic groups whose music had shaped his listening habits for years.

The coincidence felt almost unbelievable.

Remembering his sister's confident prediction, Steven smiled and introduced himself.

The girl's name was Helen.

Their conversation began with music and quickly expanded to other topics. Helen soon introduced him to her friend Anna, and before long the three of them developed a simple routine.

Each day they ate lunch together.

The lunch table became a place where conversations ranged widely. Sometimes they discussed music or school assignments.

Other times the topics turned toward deeper questions about life and belief.

Helen and Anna did not share Steven's Christian faith. They approached spiritual matters with curiosity but also skepticism. For Steven the friendships created both an opportunity and a challenge.

He wanted to share the message of the gospel with them.

Yet he lacked experience in explaining that message clearly.

At that stage of his life, he had strong convictions about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, but he had not yet learned how to present those truths effectively to others.

His attempts to explain the gospel often felt awkward.

He spoke sincerely about what he believed, yet the conversation sometimes drifted without reaching a clear conclusion. Helen and Anna listened politely but remained unconvinced.

Despite those early struggles, Steven did not abandon the effort.

He genuinely cared about his friends and hoped that someday they might understand the message that had become so important to him.

The Bible encourages believers to share their faith with gentleness and patience. The apostle Peter wrote, *"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (First Peter 3:15, KJV).

Steven had not yet learned the skill of presenting that answer clearly, but the desire to do so already lived within his heart.

Meanwhile his social life at Woodcreek High School developed in a rather unusual pattern.

Many students form their identity around a single social group. Some belong primarily to athletic circles. Others gravitate toward artistic communities or academic clubs.

Steven's friendships, however, stretched across multiple groups.

He maintained his daily lunches with Helen and Anna. He developed friendships with classmates from various courses. Students he met during bus rides also became companions.

Rather than fitting neatly into one social category, he moved comfortably between several circles.

The pattern reflected a personality that valued connection more than status.

Scripture reminds believers that God often values character more than outward appearance or popularity. When the prophet Samuel evaluated potential leaders for Israel, the Lord reminded him, *"Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart"* (First Samuel 16:7, KJV).

Steven's friendships across different groups reflected a similar spirit. He cared more about the individuals themselves than about the labels often attached to social categories.

One of his closest friendships developed in an unexpected place.

A cooking class.

When Steven first received his class schedule, he assumed the course had been assigned by mistake. Cooking seemed like an unusual subject for his academic plans. He visited the school office to request a change.

However, the counselor surprised him with unexpected news.

The cooking class was extremely popular and difficult to enter, especially for juniors.

Realizing that he had secured a rare opportunity, Steven decided to remain in the course.

The decision soon proved worthwhile.

The class met early in the morning and lasted about ninety minutes. Each day the instructor assigned a single dish for students to prepare.

While many groups followed the instructions exactly, Steven and his tablemates developed a different strategy.

They expanded the assignment.

Each member of the group began bringing additional ingredients from home so that together they could prepare full meals rather than simple dishes. What began as a basic cooking class soon became a place where elaborate breakfasts appeared on their table.

The group gained a reputation for producing the most impressive meals in the classroom.

Among the students participating in these culinary adventures was a young man named Michael.

Michael quickly became one of Steven's closest friends at Woodcreek High School.

His appearance made him stand out immediately. He wore a large afro hairstyle with a comb, often called a pick, tucked into it. Though such a style might appear ordinary today, it attracted attention on the campus at that time.

Yet Michael's personality proved even more memorable than his hairstyle. He possessed a friendly spirit and a sense of humor that made conversations enjoyable.

Their friendship grew through shared experiences in the kitchen and beyond.

Beyond school activities Steven continued exploring his interests outside the classroom as well.

Music remained an important part of his life.

He collected vinyl records whenever he could find them. Visiting record stores and used bookstores became a favorite pastime. Browsing through shelves filled with albums felt like a treasure hunt. Occasionally he discovered rare recordings that expanded his collection.

Electronic keyboards and synthesizers also fascinated him.

Hours passed as he experimented with sounds and melodies, trying to recreate the styles he admired in his favorite bands.

Music provided both relaxation and creative expression.

Yet Steven's personality also included a practical side that revealed itself in an unusual habit involving transportation.

Eventually he obtained a part time job and purchased a car.

For most teenagers this achievement represents a major milestone. Owning a car means independence. It allows students to drive themselves to school rather than relying on parents or buses.

Many of Steven's friends assumed he would begin driving immediately.

Instead, he continued riding the school bus.

The reason was simple.

His mother had already purchased a bus pass for the year.

Steven believed that using the pass honored the money she had spent.

The decision puzzled many of his classmates. From their perspective driving to school represented status and convenience.

Yet Steven viewed the situation differently.

He preferred to respect his mother's investment rather than abandon it simply for personal comfort.

The choice reflected a principle deeply rooted in biblical teaching.

The apostle Paul wrote about the importance of considering others rather than focusing solely on personal advantage. *"Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth"* (First Corinthians 10:24, KJV).

Though the verse speaks broadly about Christian conduct, the spirit of consideration appeared in Steven's decision.

Even small choices can reveal the priorities guiding a person's life.

Life at Woodcreek High School therefore unfolded in a mixture of discovery and growth.

The public-school environment introduced Steven to classmates from diverse backgrounds. Conversations with Helen and Anna challenged him to think carefully about how to express his faith. Friendships with students like Michael created memorable experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

Music continued to inspire creativity. Record collections expanded. Synthesizers filled rooms with electronic melodies.

Meanwhile everyday decisions, such as continuing to ride the school bus, reflected values shaped by family influence and biblical teaching.

The season of public school did not diminish Steven's faith.

Instead, it began refining it.

Being surrounded by classmates who did not necessarily share his beliefs forced him to consider what he truly believed and why.

The process mirrored the experience described in Scripture when faith encounters testing. The apostle James wrote, *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life"* (James 1:12, KJV).

Testing often strengthens conviction.

Through conversations at lunch tables, friendships in classrooms, and personal reflection during long bus rides, Steven's understanding of faith continued to deepen.

The boy who once struggled to explain the gospel would soon encounter opportunities that would teach him how to share that message with clarity and confidence.

But those lessons still lay ahead.

For now, the halls of Woodcreek High School served as a place where friendships formed, questions emerged, and a young man continued discovering the direction God had prepared for his life.

Chapter 10

THE GOSPEL TRACT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

Discovering Regency Baptist Church

Life sometimes turns in an instant through moments that appear ordinary at first glance. A brief conversation, a passing encounter, or a simple question can redirect the entire course of a person's journey. Looking back years later, people often recognize that what seemed small at the time was actually the beginning of something far greater.

For Steven Anderson, such a moment occurred on what seemed like a completely ordinary afternoon.

He had just finished browsing through a used bookstore, one of his favorite pastimes during his teenage years. The quiet rows of

books, the smell of old paper, and the possibility of discovering hidden treasures on the shelves always drew him in. Used bookstores felt like places where knowledge waited patiently for curious readers.

After leaving the store, Steven stepped outside and began walking through the parking lot.

A man riding a bicycle approached him.

The encounter lasted only a few seconds, yet those seconds would shape the direction of Steven's life.

As the cyclist passed by, he handed Steven a small folded pamphlet.

It was a gospel tract.

On the outside of the tract was a question printed in bold letters.

"If you died today, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?"

The question was simple, yet it carried immense weight.

Few people pause to consider the certainty of eternity during ordinary moments of life. Work, school, entertainment, and daily responsibilities often occupy the mind. Yet the Bible repeatedly calls people to reflect on the reality of life beyond this world.

The book of Hebrews offers a sobering reminder when it declares, *"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment"* (Hebrews 9:27, KJV).

The man on the bicycle did not engage in a long conversation. He simply handed Steven the tract and continued riding.

Yet the message printed on that small piece of paper demanded attention.

Steven unfolded the pamphlet and began reading.

Inside the tract he found information about a church he had never heard of before.

Regency Baptist Church.

The tract described a congregation that believed strongly in sharing the gospel with others. The message emphasized personal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and encouraged readers to consider their own spiritual condition.

Steven found the message interesting.

At that point in his life, he already believed he was saved. As a child he had prayed and trusted Christ after his mother carefully explained the gospel to him. Yet he had rarely encountered people who actively went out into the community to share that message with strangers.

The idea fascinated him.

A church that believed strongly enough in evangelism to send people door to door and into neighborhoods to tell others about salvation sounded unusual and compelling.

When he finished reading the tract, the cyclist had already disappeared from view.

The encounter might have ended there.

Yet the question printed on the front of the tract continued echoing in his thoughts.

"If you died today, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?"

The question represented more than a theological curiosity.

It represented certainty.

The Bible speaks often about the assurance believers can have regarding salvation. The apostle John wrote, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (First John 5:13, KJV).

Salvation was not meant to remain uncertain or vague. According to Scripture it could be known with confidence through faith in Jesus Christ.

For Steven, the tract also introduced something else that stirred his curiosity.

The church mentioned in the pamphlet actively practiced what many believers call soul winning.

This phrase refers to the practice of personally sharing the gospel with others in order to lead them to faith in Christ. Rather than waiting for people to attend church services, members of the congregation went directly into neighborhoods to speak with individuals about salvation.

The approach reflected the command Jesus gave to His followers shortly before His ascension.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15, KJV).

The words of Christ did not instruct believers to remain inside church buildings while hoping that others might wander in. Instead, they called Christians to go outward with the message of redemption.

That vision resonated deeply with something already growing in Steven's heart.

For several years he had carried a quiet burden for the people around him. Attending public school exposed him daily to classmates who had little understanding of the gospel. He often wished he knew how to explain the message clearly enough for them to believe.

Yet he felt unequipped.

In fact, he had prayed a simple prayer almost every night.

He asked God to allow him to lead at least one person to Christ during his lifetime.

The prayer revealed both his desire and his frustration.

He longed to share the gospel effectively, yet he lacked the training and experience to do so.

The tract in his hand suddenly presented the possibility of learning how.

When Steven returned home that day, he showed the pamphlet to his parents.

His family had attended several churches over the years, but none had strongly emphasized personal evangelism. The idea of a

congregation dedicated to spreading the gospel door to door intrigued them.

The tract described Regency Baptist Church as independent, committed to the King James Bible, non-charismatic, and focused on traditional worship and strong biblical preaching.

These characteristics appealed to the Anderson family.

They agreed to visit the church together.

Ironically Steven did not attend the very first service.

On the Sunday his parents decided to visit, he was sick and had to remain home.

Later that day his parents returned and described their experience.

They told him the service had been powerful, yet they also offered a warning.

The preaching had been intense.

Steven listened carefully as they spoke.

Powerful preaching did not discourage him.

In fact, it excited him.

He insisted that he wanted to attend the following Sunday.

When that Sunday arrived, Steven entered the building of Regency Baptist Church for the first time.

Immediately he sensed something different about the atmosphere.

The congregation numbered around one hundred fifty people. The building itself was not particularly large or luxurious. Yet the spiritual energy inside the room felt vibrant.

People sang hymns with enthusiasm. Conversations before the service reflected genuine warmth among the members.

The atmosphere carried a sense of purpose.

Soon the pastor stepped forward to preach.

His name was Pastor Nichols.

From the moment he began speaking, Steven noticed the difference between this sermon and the ones he had heard in many other churches.

The preaching was passionate.

Pastor Nichols opened the Bible and began explaining passages with energy and conviction. Instead of delivering a short speech filled with general encouragement, he spent time exploring Scripture deeply.

Verses flowed one after another as he connected different passages across the Bible. His voice rose and fell with intensity as he explained doctrine and challenged listeners to examine their lives in light of God's Word.

The sermon lasted more than an hour.

Yet to Steven it felt as though the time passed quickly.

This experience contrasted sharply with the services he had known before. In the previous church his family attended, sermons usually lasted about twenty minutes. Despite their brevity, they often seemed long and lacking in depth.

At Regency Baptist Church the opposite was true.

The preaching lasted far longer, yet the message remained engaging because it focused directly on Scripture.

The apostle Paul instructed young preacher Timothy with a command that has guided faithful pastors throughout history.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (Second Timothy 4:2, KJV).

Listening to Pastor Nichols, Steven sensed that this command was being taken seriously.

The sermon did not attempt to entertain the congregation with stories or humor alone. Instead, it aimed to communicate the truth of God's Word with clarity and urgency.

For someone who had long desired deeper understanding of Scripture, the experience felt refreshing.

Yet the strength of Regency Baptist Church extended beyond the preaching of one man.

Another aspect impressed Steven's parents even more deeply.

Unity among the leadership.

In many churches disagreements between leaders create tension that weakens the ministry. Pastors may hold strong convictions while influential members attempt to restrain their direction.

At Regency Baptist Church the situation appeared very different.

The congregation seemed united around a shared vision of biblical teaching and evangelism.

Interestingly this unity became especially visible because Pastor Nichols faced significant health challenges. At times his illness prevented him from preaching for extended periods.

During those weeks other men from the church filled the pulpit.

Rather than weakening the church, these occasions revealed the strength of its foundation. The laymen who preached delivered powerful sermons rooted firmly in Scripture.

Their messages carried the same emphasis on evangelism and doctrinal clarity.

This unity impressed the Anderson family greatly.

It demonstrated that the commitment to biblical truth extended beyond one individual. The entire church shared the same dedication to proclaiming the gospel.

One particular evening service left an especially strong impression on Steven.

It was a summer night in Sacramento.

The heat of the day lingered inside the church building, which lacked air conditioning. The congregation sat closely together on metal folding chairs that filled the room.

Many of the chairs had originally come from a Mexican restaurant, and the stencil markings from their previous use remained visible.

Despite the uncomfortable heat, the atmosphere inside the building felt electric.

A man from the church known as Brother Chuck stepped forward to preach that evening.

His sermon focused on the importance of soul winning.

As he spoke, sweat formed on foreheads throughout the room. Fans hummed quietly in the background, struggling to circulate the warm air.

Yet no one seemed distracted by the conditions.

The message commanded attention.

Brother Chuck spoke passionately about the responsibility of every Christian to share the gospel with others. He described the joy of leading someone to Christ and the urgency of reaching people before it was too late.

Scripture after Scripture flowed through his sermon.

One verse captured the heart of his message.

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30, KJV).

The words struck Steven deeply.

For years he had desired to lead someone to Christ but felt uncertain about how to do it.

Here was a church where believers actively pursued that mission.

As he sat in the crowded room listening to the sermon, a thought crossed his mind.

This might be the church he had been searching for all along.

After attending services for about a month, the Anderson family faced an important decision.

For a short time, they had continued attending their previous church early on Sunday mornings before driving across town to Regency Baptist Church for the later service.

Maintaining both schedules soon proved unnecessary.

The difference between the two experiences had become unmistakable.

At Regency they found strong biblical preaching, passionate evangelism, and a congregation united in purpose.

Eventually they decided to make Regency Baptist Church their primary place of worship.

The decision marked the beginning of a new chapter in Steven's spiritual journey.

He began attending Sunday school, morning services, evening services, and other church activities regularly. The congregation soon became his primary community of friends and mentors.

Looking back later in life, he would recognize that the encounter outside the bookstore had been far more than a random moment.

It had been a divine appointment.

The man who handed him that gospel tract remained a mystery. Despite searching for him during the first weeks of attending the church, Steven never discovered his identity.

Even Pastor Nichols confirmed that he had not been the cyclist.

Yet the impact of that brief encounter continued unfolding in ways that would shape the rest of Steven's life.

Sometimes the most powerful moments of change begin with a simple question printed on a small piece of paper.

"If you died today, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?"

For Steven Anderson, that question opened the door to a church community that would nurture his faith, train him in evangelism, and guide him toward the ministry that awaited him in the years ahead.

And as Scripture reminds us, God often uses unexpected means to accomplish His purposes.

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way" (Psalm 37:23, KJV).

Chapter 11

YOUTH GROUP, FIRST SERMON, AND SOUL WINNING

Early Ministry Opportunities

There are moments in a person's life when a quiet desire suddenly finds a place to grow. For Steven Anderson, those moments began to unfold during his teenage years at Regency Baptist Church. What started as a simple visit to a new congregation soon developed into something deeper. The church did not merely welcome young people to sit and observe. It encouraged them to participate, to learn, and to serve.

Within that environment, Steven began discovering the first opportunities that would eventually shape his path toward ministry.

His involvement at the church centered heavily around the youth group. At seventeen years old he found himself surrounded by other teenagers who shared a common interest in learning the Bible and serving in the church. The friendships formed within the youth group quickly became an important part of his life.

Yet the setting for those gatherings was anything but ordinary.

The teenage Sunday school class met inside an old, broken-down bus.

The church owned several buses that had once been used to transport children to services and special events. Over time some of those buses had become too worn to remain on the road. Rather than discarding them, the church found a creative solution. The unused vehicles became classrooms.

Each Sunday morning the teenagers climbed aboard one of those buses and took their seats inside. The youth leader stood near the front, teaching lessons from the Scriptures while the students listened from the rows behind him.

The unusual setting created an atmosphere that was both humble and memorable.

Inside that bus, surrounded by worn seats and narrow aisles, young people studied the Word of God. The environment served as a reminder that spiritual growth does not depend on beautiful

buildings or elaborate facilities. The power of Scripture can transform hearts wherever people gather to hear it.

The youth leader guiding those lessons was a man named Meredith Sears.

Pastor Sears possessed a heart for young people. He believed teenagers were capable of learning the Scriptures deeply and serving God meaningfully even before reaching adulthood. Instead of treating them as spectators in church life, he encouraged them to become active participants.

His approach reflected a biblical principle found throughout Scripture. God has often used young individuals to accomplish significant work.

The apostle Paul once reminded Timothy, a young minister, of this truth when he wrote, *"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (First Timothy 4:12, KJV).

That verse captured the spirit of the youth ministry at Regency Baptist Church. Teenagers were not expected to wait until adulthood before serving God. They were encouraged to begin immediately.

One of the ways the church provided opportunities for young people was through special youth services.

Every few months the congregation held an evening service run entirely by teenagers. Young men preached the sermons, others led the singing, some played instruments, and others helped collect the offering.

The event gave teenagers a chance to experience leadership within the church while receiving encouragement from the congregation.

When the first youth service approached after Steven joined the church, Pastor Sears asked if anyone would volunteer to preach.

The room fell silent.

Public speaking can feel intimidating, especially for teenagers. Most of the students avoided eye contact, hoping the responsibility might pass to someone else.

Steven raised his hand.

The response surprised the youth leader. Steven had only recently joined the church, and Pastor Sears wanted to observe him for a little while longer before placing him behind the pulpit.

Instead, he asked Steven to help in another way.

Steven would play the piano during the service.

The role suited him well. Years of practicing the instrument at home had prepared him to provide music for the congregation. Though he had hoped to preach, he accepted the opportunity gladly.

The evening of the youth service became both memorable and entertaining.

Three teenage boys delivered sermons that night. Some spoke with confidence while others struggled through their messages nervously. Recognizing that the young preachers might feel anxious, Pastor Sears encouraged the congregation to respond enthusiastically.

He told them to support the young speakers by saying "Amen" and offering encouraging responses.

The result created an atmosphere filled with energy.

At one point a particularly nervous teenager declared from the pulpit, "Sin is wrong."

The congregation erupted with affirmations and encouragement.

Though the moment carried a touch of humor, it also revealed something beautiful about the church community. The members genuinely wanted to see young people succeed.

They understood that confidence grows when others provide encouragement.

Scripture frequently reminds believers of the importance of strengthening one another. The writer of Hebrews urged Christians with these words. *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin"* (Hebrews 3:13, KJV).

Encouragement can transform hesitation into courage.

For Steven, the experience of playing the piano while watching young men preach stirred something inside him.

He wanted to preach as well.

Soon another youth service approached.

This time Pastor Sears gave Steven the opportunity he had been hoping for.

He would deliver the sermon.

The moment represented a significant milestone. Standing behind a pulpit and speaking to a congregation requires both courage and preparation. Even experienced speakers sometimes feel nervous when addressing a crowd.

Yet Steven approached the opportunity with enthusiasm.

Pastor Sears introduced him warmly, mentioning his strong interest in Scripture and his particular passion for defending the King James Version of the Bible.

The King James Bible held special significance within the church. Many members believed it represented the most faithful English translation of the Scriptures. For Steven the subject had already become a point of conviction through his personal study.

His sermon therefore focused on explaining and defending that position.

Remarkably the message was recorded on video.

Although Steven would eventually preach hundreds of sermons in the years ahead, very few recordings exist from his earliest attempts. The recording of that youth service therefore became a rare historical glimpse into the beginning of his preaching ministry.

When he finished speaking, the congregation responded warmly.

Members of the church approached him afterward offering words of encouragement. Some commented on the depth of Scripture he had included in the sermon. Others expressed surprise that someone so young could speak with such conviction.

The encouragement strengthened his confidence.

Deep within his heart a growing sense began to emerge.

Perhaps preaching might become an important part of his life.

The Bible describes the calling of those who preach the Word as a serious and sacred responsibility. The apostle Paul wrote, *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (First Corinthians 9:16, KJV).

While Steven had not yet fully understood the path ahead, the experience of delivering his first sermon awakened a passion that would continue to grow.

Meanwhile the youth group itself became his primary circle of friends.

Together they participated in activities, services, and outreach programs. The friendships formed during those years created bonds that lasted long beyond the teenage stage of life.

One event in particular left a strong impression on the group.

The church organized a youth retreat in a snowy mountain area where the teenagers spent time together in cabins. They enjoyed outdoor activities, shared meals, and attended devotional meetings.

During one of those gatherings Pastor Sears spoke openly to the group.

After many years of youth ministry, he told them that this group of teenagers represented the kind of youth group he had always dreamed of leading. Their enthusiasm, unity, and desire to serve God filled him with gratitude.

Hearing those words deeply encouraged the young people.

They realized that their participation in church life mattered more than they had previously imagined.

Soon afterward Steven reached another milestone in his life.

He graduated from high school earlier than most students.

Instead of finishing in May like the majority of seniors, he completed his studies in January at the age of seventeen and a half.

Technically graduation meant he should move out of the youth group and begin attending the adult classes at church.

Yet he hesitated.

The youth group had become his closest community. Most graduates either left for Bible college or drifted away from church entirely. Very few young adults remained between the teenage and adult groups.

Steven did not want to lose the friendships he had formed.

So, he made a quiet decision.

He simply continued attending the youth group.

As long as he remained under eighteen, no one questioned his presence.

The friendships and ministry opportunities continued for a little while longer.

Yet the most important lesson Steven learned during that period involved something far more significant than preaching sermons or playing the piano.

It involved sharing the gospel.

One of the defining practices of Regency Baptist Church was door to door evangelism.

Every Saturday morning members gathered to go out into neighborhoods and speak with residents about salvation. The teenagers also participated in their own outreach each Wednesday evening before the midweek service.

After finishing their visits, they often stopped at a nearby McDonald's restaurant before returning to church.

For Steven, this activity represented the answer to a prayer he had been praying for years.

He wanted to lead someone to Christ.

His first experience in soul winning came during a Saturday outing when he was paired with a man named Dan Dion.

For several hours Steven watched carefully as Dion knocked on doors and began conversations with strangers. Using passages from the Bible, he explained the message of salvation clearly and patiently.

To Steven's amazement several people prayed to receive Christ during those visits.

The experience revealed that sharing the gospel did not have to remain mysterious or complicated. With the right approach and knowledge of Scripture, ordinary believers could lead others to faith.

Eventually Steven asked if he could try knocking on the next door himself.

Though nervous, he stepped forward and began speaking with the person who answered.

The conversation did not lead immediately to salvation, yet something unexpected happened.

He invited a young girl to attend church and gave her an invitation card.

To his surprise she actually came.

The following day she attended the service and later accepted Christ as her Savior.

For Steven the moment felt incredible.

Years earlier he had prayed simply to see one person saved through his witness. Now he had seen the beginning of that prayer answered.

Scripture often celebrates the joy of leading others to faith. The book of Daniel contains a beautiful promise that says, *"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever"* (Daniel 12:3, KJV).

That promise captured the excitement Steven felt during those early experiences in soul winning.

The boy who once struggled to explain the gospel to his friends at school was now learning how to share the message clearly.

Each door knocked represented an opportunity. Each conversation carried the possibility of eternal impact.

As the months passed, Steven continued participating in these outreach efforts regularly. The practice strengthened both his confidence and his understanding of Scripture.

Looking back later in life, he would recognize that those early experiences at Regency Baptist Church formed the foundation of his ministry.

Inside a broken-down bus he studied the Bible.

During youth services he delivered his first sermon.

Walking through neighborhoods he discovered the joy of leading people to Christ.

Those simple beginnings prepared him for the calling that would eventually define his life.

And through every opportunity, the words of Jesus remained central.

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37, KJV).

Steven Anderson had begun to understand what it meant to become one of those laborers.

Chapter 12

MISSIONARY DREAMS AND GERMANY

Early Ministry Vision

Every life contains seasons when the future begins to take shape in quiet and often unexpected ways. During those moments the direction of a person's calling slowly becomes clearer. Dreams begin forming in the heart, questions about purpose grow stronger, and decisions arise that require faith as well as courage.

For Steven Anderson, such a season arrived shortly after he graduated from high school. The experiences he had encountered at Regency Baptist Church had awakened a deep passion within him. Soul winning had become a regular part of his life. Preaching his first sermon had revealed the joy of opening the

Scriptures to others. The friendships he had formed within the church strengthened his commitment to serve God faithfully.

Yet one important question remained.

What would he do with the rest of his life?

Many young men in his church chose a familiar path. They enrolled in Bible college shortly after graduating from high school. Those schools provided training for ministry and prepared students for service as pastors, missionaries, or church workers.

Steven, however, felt uncertain about that route.

He believed strongly in learning and studying the Scriptures, but he was not convinced that formal Bible college education was the only path to ministry. Instead, he wanted to gain practical experience. He wanted to observe ministry in real life settings, not merely study it in classrooms.

At the same time, he also enrolled in community college.

The decision reflected both practicality and curiosity. College offered the opportunity to continue learning while he explored his future direction. Yet unlike many students who carefully planned their academic path toward a particular career, Steven simply chose classes that interested him.

Some courses involved physical education. Others focused on mathematics. Still others explored languages.

It was the language classes that captured his imagination most deeply.

Steven enrolled in Spanish and German courses.

Spanish came somewhat easily to him. The language shared similarities with words he had encountered before, and many people around him spoke it regularly. Practicing Spanish provided an opportunity to communicate with a wider range of individuals in everyday life.

German, however, presented a completely new challenge.

The language contained unfamiliar sounds and structures that required careful study. Words often seemed long and complex. Grammar rules followed patterns very different from English.

Yet the challenge fascinated him.

Language learning felt like unlocking a new world. Each word represented a doorway into another culture. Each sentence formed a bridge between people who might otherwise struggle to communicate.

Steven found himself captivated by the process.

Every evening he studied vocabulary and grammar. He practiced pronunciation and memorized phrases. Slowly the language began to make sense.

Although he did not yet realize it, this growing interest in German would soon connect with a larger vision forming in his heart.

During his time at Regency Baptist Church, Steven's exposure to evangelism and preaching had awakened a desire to serve God beyond the boundaries of his own community.

He began thinking seriously about missionary work.

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the global scope of the gospel message. Jesus commanded His followers to carry the message of salvation to every nation. The book of Matthew records His words with clarity and urgency.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19, KJV).

That command stirred Steven's imagination.

What if he could travel to other countries and share the gospel with people who had never heard it clearly before?

The idea filled him with excitement.

Yet he understood that missionary work required preparation. It demanded humility, dedication, and a willingness to serve in unfamiliar environments.

With those thoughts in mind, Steven approached Pastor Nichols with an unusual proposal.

Instead of enrolling immediately in Bible college, he asked whether it might be possible for him to spend time overseas working alongside missionaries. He did not expect to receive payment. He simply wanted the opportunity to observe ministry and learn from experienced pastors.

His plan was straightforward.

If a missionary family would allow him to stay with them for a few months, he would gladly help with any tasks they needed completed. He would perform manual labor, assist with projects, and contribute in whatever ways he could.

In return he would gain experience.

Pastor Nichols appreciated the sincerity of the request.

After contacting several missionaries, he eventually found one who was willing to host the young volunteer.

The missionary's name was Bill Richards.

The location was Germany.

For Steven the opportunity felt like a remarkable answer to prayer. Germany represented the perfect environment for both ministry exposure and language learning. The German classes he had been studying suddenly gained new purpose.

However there remained one practical obstacle.

Travel expenses.

International airfare was expensive, especially for a teenager working modest jobs. The plane ticket alone cost more than a thousand dollars.

Yet Steven remained determined.

He worked diligently to save money. One of his jobs was at Round Table Pizza, where he spent long hours earning the funds necessary for the trip.

Eventually he even sold one of his prized possessions.

His synthesizer.

Music had been one of his favorite hobbies, but the opportunity to travel overseas and serve alongside missionaries seemed far more valuable. Selling the instrument provided the final amount needed for the airfare.

Soon the day arrived when he boarded the airplane.

For a young man who had never traveled far beyond his familiar surroundings, the journey felt both thrilling and humbling. The flight carried him across an ocean and into a culture very different from his own.

Germany welcomed him with new sights, new sounds, and new experiences.

The cities displayed architecture that reflected centuries of history. Cobblestone streets wound through old neighborhoods. Churches with towering spires stood as reminders of Europe's rich religious heritage.

Yet beneath the beauty of the landscape lay a spiritual reality that concerned many missionaries.

While Germany possessed a long history connected to Christianity, modern society had largely drifted away from active faith. Many people viewed religion as a cultural tradition rather than a living relationship with God.

Missionaries in the country therefore faced the challenge of presenting the gospel to individuals who often felt indifferent toward spiritual matters.

For Steven the experience provided an education far beyond anything a classroom could offer.

During the three months he spent traveling among various missionaries, he encountered a wide range of ministry environments. Some churches thrived with enthusiastic congregations. Others struggled with limited resources and small attendance.

Throughout the trip he worked tirelessly.

Manual labor filled much of his time. He helped with construction projects, cleaned church buildings, assisted with yard work, and performed many other tasks that missionaries needed completed.

The work was not glamorous.

Yet it revealed something essential about ministry.

Serving God often requires practical effort long before public recognition appears.

The apostle Paul once described ministry using a similar image when he wrote, *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase"* (First Corinthians 3:6, KJV).

Planting and watering require patient labor. Growth arrives later through God's blessing.

Each day Steven participated in church activities and observed how missionaries interacted with their communities. In the evenings he returned to his study routine.

German lessons continued.

Every night he opened his textbook and practiced the language. He reviewed vocabulary, translated sentences, and attempted to speak with local residents whenever possible.

Immersion accelerated his progress.

Hearing the language spoken around him allowed the words he had memorized in class to come alive. Conversations at stores, restaurants, and churches became opportunities to practice.

Gradually his confidence increased.

Language learning also reinforced an important spiritual truth.

The gospel message transcends cultural boundaries.

Though people may speak different languages and live within different traditions, the need for salvation remains universal. The apostle Paul expressed this reality clearly when he wrote, *"For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:22 to 23, KJV).

Humanity shares a common need for redemption.

During his travels Steven met several pastors whose ministries left lasting impressions on him.

Some inspired admiration.

Others provided cautionary lessons.

In certain churches he encountered leaders whose dedication to Scripture and evangelism stirred his heart. These pastors preached with conviction and organized outreach efforts within their communities.

Watching them strengthened Steven's belief that faithful ministry could impact lives profoundly.

However not every experience proved encouraging.

Some pastors held theological views that troubled him. Others seemed less committed to evangelism than he had expected.

These moments challenged Steven to think carefully about the kind of ministry he wanted to pursue in the future.

The Bible often reminds believers that wisdom grows through observing both positive and negative examples. The book of Proverbs teaches this principle when it says, *"The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going"* (Proverbs 14:15, KJV).

Learning from experience requires thoughtful reflection.

Among the many pastors he met during his time in Germany, one individual stood out particularly.

His name was Thomas Hastings.

Pastor Hastings oversaw a church that was undergoing an ambitious construction project. The congregation was building a facility made from solid stone, an undertaking that required enormous effort.

Steven joined the work crews helping with the project.

The labor proved physically demanding. Long days involved swinging sledgehammers, operating jackhammers, and carrying heavy materials.

Yet through the exhausting work Steven observed something remarkable.

Pastor Hastings led by example.

Rather than directing others from a distance, he worked alongside the volunteers. His dedication to the project reflected a deep commitment to the church and its mission.

Watching that example left a lasting impression on Steven.

Leadership in ministry required humility and hard work.

Jesus Himself taught this principle when He said, *"Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister"* (Matthew 20:26, KJV).

True leadership begins with service.

The church under Pastor Hastings's care also demonstrated vibrant spiritual life. Members participated actively in evangelism, and the congregation showed enthusiasm for spreading the gospel.

These experiences encouraged Steven greatly.

They revealed that strong churches could flourish even in environments where faith seemed to be declining.

By the time his three months in Germany came to an end, Steven realized that the journey had changed him.

The experiences had broadened his understanding of ministry. He had witnessed both inspiring examples and cautionary situations. He had learned that missionary work required perseverance, humility, and unwavering commitment to Scripture.

He had also discovered the joy of stepping outside his comfort zone in order to serve God.

Perhaps most importantly, the trip strengthened his sense that God was guiding his life toward ministry.

Though the exact path remained uncertain, the direction had become clearer.

Looking back on those months, Steven recognized that the lessons he learned extended far beyond language study or construction work.

They were lessons about calling.

The apostle Paul once described his own mission using words that captured the spirit of dedication required for ministry.

"But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy" (Acts 20:24, KJV).

Steven's journey to Germany had begun as an exploration of missionary possibilities.

By the time he returned home, it had become a defining chapter in the preparation of a future preacher.

The young man who had once prayed simply to lead one person to Christ now carried a vision far larger than he had imagined.

And the experiences gained across the Atlantic would soon shape the next stage of his life and ministry.

Chapter 13

A DIVINE ROMANCE

Meeting His Future Wife

The story of a person's life often includes moments when God's providence becomes visible in the most unexpected ways. Sometimes those moments involve ministry, sometimes they involve personal growth, and sometimes they involve relationships that change the direction of an entire future.

For Steven Anderson, one such moment occurred in a bustling public square in the heart of Munich, Germany.

The date was October fourth, 1999.

The location was Marienplatz.

Marienplatz stands as one of the most famous squares in Germany. It sits in the center of Munich, surrounded by historic buildings and filled with constant activity. Tourists move through the area with cameras and maps. Street musicians perform for passing crowds. Commuters hurry toward trains or workplaces.

Amid the movement of people and the sounds of city life, Steven stood quietly distributing gospel tracts.

He had traveled to Germany with the desire to assist missionaries and share the message of salvation with anyone willing to listen. One of the simplest tools for that purpose was a small printed pamphlet. Each tract contained verses from Scripture and explained how a person could receive eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

The practice of giving gospel tracts has been used by Christians for generations. Sometimes the message is received with interest. Other times it is ignored. Occasionally it leads to conversations that reveal deeper spiritual hunger.

That day in Marienplatz, Steven handed a tract to a young woman walking through the square.

She accepted the paper politely and continued walking.

For a moment the encounter seemed finished.

Yet something unusual happened.

After walking about twenty feet away, the woman suddenly stopped.

She turned around and walked back toward him.

Holding the tract in her hand, she spoke with a tone of mild confusion.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I'm not interested in soccer."

Steven looked at the pamphlet and realized the source of the misunderstanding.

The tract contained a picture of a soccer player on the front.

In Europe soccer is one of the most popular sports. The woman had assumed the pamphlet related to athletics rather than religion.

"It's not about soccer," Steven replied. "It's about the gospel."

The young woman looked puzzled.

"The gospel?" she asked. "Can you sing them for me?"

Steven blinked in confusion.

"What do you mean?"

"The gospel songs," she explained.

In German culture the word "gospel" often refers to a style of music rather than the biblical message of salvation. She thought he was referring to singing rather than preaching.

The misunderstanding created a brief moment of laughter.

Once the confusion cleared, Steven began explaining what he meant.

He opened his Bible and started walking her through the message of salvation step by step. The conversation followed a path familiar to many evangelists.

He began with the problem of sin.

The book of Romans declares, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23, KJV).

Steven explained that every human being has sinned and therefore stands in need of forgiveness.

He then spoke about the consequence of sin.

"For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23, KJV).

Death in this context refers not only to physical death but also to eternal separation from God.

Yet the message of the gospel does not end with condemnation. It continues with hope.

"But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23, KJV).

Steven described how Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose again to provide salvation for anyone who believes.

Finally, he shared the promise of salvation found in Scripture.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9, KJV).

The young woman listened carefully as he explained each verse.

When he finished, she paused for a moment and then responded with a practical concern.

"Well," she said, "none of this will help me if I'm late for work."

Her answer carried a tone that was neither hostile nor dismissive. It simply reflected the reality of daily life. Work awaited her, and the conversation could not continue indefinitely.

Before she left, Steven asked if she would be willing to share her contact information so they could stay in touch.

She agreed and provided her phone number and email address.

In truth Steven rarely followed up with people he met during evangelism efforts. Yet something about this conversation felt different.

The next day he returned to the same spot in Marienplatz to distribute more tracts.

Part of him hoped he might see her again.

Sure, enough she appeared, walking through the square on her way to work.

She greeted him cheerfully and began the conversation with an amusing question.

"How do you like my new boots?" she asked.

Steven glanced down and noticed that her "boots" were actually tennis shoes.

English was not her first language. In fact, it was her third language. Yet despite the occasional vocabulary confusion, she spoke with remarkable fluency.

The two talked for several minutes before she hurried off to work.

The following day she did not appear.

Steven felt a small sense of disappointment.

Later that evening he decided to call the number she had given him.

During the phone conversation he invited her to attend a church service that evening. She said she would try to come.

They spoke for about fifteen minutes before ending the call.

Steven waited with quiet anticipation during the church service that night.

But she did not arrive.

The next morning, she returned to Marienplatz and apologized for missing the service. A friend had asked for help at the last minute, and she had chosen to assist her instead.

Looking back later, Steven would sometimes reflect that her absence may have been providential.

The church he had invited her to attend during that trip was not particularly vibrant or inspiring. In contrast, the first Baptist church she would later experience in California would leave a far stronger impression.

That morning in Marienplatz another dramatic event unfolded nearby.

A man in the square reportedly poured gasoline on himself and his car while threatening to set it on fire. The alarming situation drew a crowd and created intense commotion.

Steven and the young woman spoke about the unfolding event along with other everyday topics before she eventually continued on her way to work.

That brief conversation became their final meeting in Germany.

The next day Steven passed through Marienplatz on his way to the train station. He was preparing to leave Munich and travel to another region of the country.

As he crossed the square he glanced around repeatedly, hoping he might see her one last time.

But she was not there. Life continued. Months passed.

Steven returned to the United States and resumed his normal routine. Work, church activities, and college classes filled his days.

Yet the connection formed during those brief conversations in Munich did not disappear entirely.

Occasionally they exchanged emails or letters.

The communication remained friendly and casual. Steven had met many people during his travels in Germany, and several had become pen pals through correspondence.

For a long time, the relationship carried no romantic expectations.

Yet sometimes friendships grow quietly through simple communication.

Eventually the young woman mentioned her desire to travel to an English-speaking country for a vacation.

Steven immediately suggested the United States.

More specifically he suggested California.

He described the beautiful scenery, the famous landmarks, and the unique experiences she could enjoy there. He even offered a practical solution for accommodations.

She could stay in the guest room at his parents' house.

His reasoning seemed straightforward.

Hosting her visit would allow him to practice speaking German while showing her the sights of Northern California.

Through a series of emails, the plan gradually developed.

Steven decided to use money he had been saving for another trip to Germany to support her visit instead. He arranged time off from work and began planning a schedule of activities.

There was only one condition.

If she came to visit, she would attend church with him three times each week.

She agreed.

Only later did Steven realize that he had forgotten one important step.

He had not asked his parents for permission.

Instead of directly requesting approval, he began introducing the idea through casual conversations. He mentioned how interesting it might be to host a foreign visitor or exchange student so he could practice speaking German.

His parents responded positively.

A week later he revealed that the situation was no longer hypothetical.

The visitor was already planning to arrive on the twenty eighth.

Though surprised, his parents graciously agreed.

Soon the day arrived when Steven drove to the airport in San Francisco.

Because international communication was far more limited at that time, he feared the possibility of missing her arrival. Determined to avoid that outcome, he arrived more than eight hours before her flight landed.

The long wait passed slowly.

He spent time reading, walking through the terminal, and watching arrival boards for updates.

Finally, the flight arrived.

Passengers began walking through the gate area.

Steven held up a small sign with her name written on it so she could recognize him easily.

When she saw the sign, she laughed.

The gesture made him look like a chauffeur waiting for a passenger.

Yet the moment carried significance.

Two people who had met briefly in a German square were now reconnecting on the other side of the world.

The drive from San Francisco to Sacramento took far longer than expected because of heavy Friday traffic.

What normally required less than two hours stretched to nearly four.

Yet the extended drive gave them plenty of time to talk.

During that journey Steven once again shared the message of the gospel.

She listened thoughtfully but remained uncertain.

The next morning, they began exploring California together.

Their first destination was Six Flags Marine World.

The day included roller coasters, animal shows, and long conversations while standing in line for rides. Amid the laughter and excitement, they discovered that their cultural backgrounds and personal beliefs differed in several areas.

One conversation about raising children turned into a debate about discipline.

She came from a European culture where certain practices were viewed very differently than in Steven's environment. Yet despite their disagreements, the day remained enjoyable and filled with lively discussion.

Throughout the visit Steven continued sharing his faith in subtle ways.

Instead of directing every conversation toward her personally, he often began speaking with strangers nearby. While waiting in line for rides or walking through crowded areas, he would explain the gospel to people around them.

His hope was that she would overhear those conversations and consider the message without feeling pressured.

The approach created opportunities for thoughtful reflection.

One evening while driving home she raised an important question.

She doubted that the Bible could be true because it seemed incompatible with modern science.

Having grown up in the Catholic Church but later rejecting it, she described herself as largely agnostic.

Steven responded by explaining how many biblical statements about the natural world had proven accurate long before scientific discoveries confirmed them.

The conversation removed some of the intellectual barriers she had associated with Christianity.

Soon Sunday arrived.

That day she attended Regency Baptist Church for the first time.

The experience surprised her.

Instead of the formal and quiet services she had known in Europe, the church atmosphere felt energetic and engaging. The preaching carried passion, and the congregation responded with enthusiasm.

Later that afternoon they enjoyed a relaxing outing by the river before returning for the evening service.

During the invitation at the end of that service something remarkable happened.

She raised her hand to indicate uncertainty about her salvation.

A woman from the church approached her and explained the message of salvation privately.

Though she understood the explanation, she admitted that she was not yet ready to make a decision.

Steven returned home that night feeling discouraged.

He had begun developing strong feelings for her, yet he had already decided that he would never pursue a relationship with someone who did not share his faith.

In his room he prayed earnestly for her salvation.

The apostle Paul once expressed a similar burden when he wrote, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved"* (Romans 10:1, KJV).

Steven's prayer echoed that same longing.

What he did not realize was that while he prayed downstairs, she was upstairs in the guest room experiencing her own moment of reflection.

The conversations, sermons, and Scriptures she had heard throughout the weekend filled her thoughts.

Finally, she bowed her head and placed her faith in Christ.

The next day she told him what had happened.

The news filled him with overwhelming joy.

A spiritual barrier that had once seemed impossible had disappeared.

Their friendship soon deepened into something more.

What began with a misunderstood gospel tract in a German square had grown into a relationship shaped by faith and shared purpose.

The story of their meeting illustrates a beautiful truth found throughout Scripture.

God often weaves together circumstances in ways that human planning could never achieve.

The book of Proverbs declares, *"A man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps"* (Proverbs 16:9, KJV).

For Steven Anderson, the steps that began in Marienplatz would soon lead toward marriage, family, and a future ministry that neither of them could yet fully imagine.

Chapter 14

MARRIAGE AND EARLY FAMILY LIFE

Building a Home with Faith

Life often moves through seasons that test a person's faith while also strengthening it. The early days of marriage frequently represent one of those seasons. Two individuals step into a shared future, learning how to build a home together while trusting God to guide each step. Resources may be limited, responsibilities may feel overwhelming, and the road ahead may remain uncertain. Yet those early experiences often shape the foundation upon which an entire lifetime is built.

For Steven Anderson and his wife, the beginning of married life arrived with both excitement and simplicity.

Their relationship had developed quickly, and their decision to marry followed a path that few people might have expected. After a short but meaningful time together in California, they had chosen to commit their lives to one another. Their wedding took place in Reno, Nevada, in a small and uncomplicated ceremony.

There were no elaborate decorations, no grand hall filled with guests, and no extended preparations.

Instead, there was simply a young couple standing together with confidence in their decision and hope for the future.

Sometimes the most meaningful beginnings appear in the humblest settings.

The Bible often reminds believers that the value of a marriage does not depend upon wealth or ceremony but upon commitment and devotion. Scripture describes the beauty of companionship with words that have encouraged countless couples throughout history.

"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Proverbs 18:22, KJV).

For Steven, marriage marked the beginning of a partnership built upon shared faith and a desire to serve God together.

Yet the early days of that partnership also revealed the practical realities of building a home from almost nothing.

After the wedding the couple settled into a small one-bedroom apartment in Rancho Cordova, California, near Sacramento. The apartment was modest and simple. Compared with many homes, it offered few comforts or conveniences.

In fact, the newly married couple owned very little furniture.

Their bed consisted of a single twin mattress placed directly on the floor. It was not large enough for two people to sleep comfortably, yet it became the place where they rested after long days of work and responsibility.

The apartment contained no sofa.

There was no dining table.

In the kitchen they owned only a handful of basic items. Two plates rested in the cabinet along with two forks, two spoons, and two drinking glasses.

From a material perspective their home appeared nearly empty.

Yet within that small apartment lived a deep sense of joy.

For Steven and his wife, the excitement of marriage overshadowed every inconvenience. They were beginning life

together, learning to support one another, and trusting God to provide what they needed.

Many couples spend their early years pursuing comfort and possessions. Yet Scripture often presents a different perspective on happiness.

The apostle Paul once wrote, *"But godliness with contentment is great gain"* (First Timothy 6:6, KJV).

Contentment does not depend upon abundance.

It grows from gratitude.

The young couple experienced that truth daily.

Slowly their small apartment began to change as friends from church stepped in with generous hearts. Members of the congregation donated furniture that helped transform the empty rooms into a more comfortable home.

Someone provided a bed.

Another person offered a sofa.

Eventually a small table and two chairs appeared in the kitchen.

Even then their resources remained limited. When friends came over for dinner, the couple often asked them to bring extra chairs because the apartment still had seating for only two people.

Yet the gatherings filled the home with laughter and conversation.

Hospitality does not require wealth.

It requires warmth.

The early months of marriage also introduced Steven to the serious responsibilities of providing for a family.

He worked long hours installing alarm systems and performing other types of low voltage electrical work. The job involved wiring security systems, setting up equipment, and troubleshooting technical issues in homes and businesses.

The workdays were long.

Typically, he worked ten hour shifts five days each week. Saturdays often offered opportunities for overtime at higher pay.

For many workers the chance to earn additional income on weekends would seem irresistible. Yet Steven often chose not to accept those extra hours.

His reason reflected a deep concern for his wife.

She had moved from another country to begin life in the United States. Away from family and familiar surroundings, she faced the challenge of building a new life in an unfamiliar place.

Steven understood that long weekdays alone could feel lonely for her.

Whenever possible he used Saturdays to spend time together rather than working additional hours.

Their financial situation required careful discipline.

Each week they operated on a grocery and household budget of only forty dollars. That amount needed to cover food as well as basic necessities such as soap, cleaning supplies, and toiletries.

Restaurant meals were almost impossible.

Eating out remained a rare luxury.

Yet even during those financially tight months, one small tradition brought joy to their weekly routine.

Every Friday evening Steven's parents gathered at a restaurant called Chili's Grill and Bar. For years they had ordered the same meal each time they visited.

Fajitas.

The staff at the restaurant had come to know them so well that they even attended the wedding of their regular waiter.

After Steven married, his parents invited the young couple to join them for the Friday evening tradition.

Those dinners became cherished moments.

For a short time, each week the worries of finances and responsibilities faded as the family gathered around a table filled with warm food and lively conversation.

Often after dinner Steven and his wife returned to his parents' home and spent the evening together talking and relaxing. Many times, they stayed overnight in the bedroom where Steven had once lived before marriage.

The following morning, they shared breakfast before returning to their apartment.

Simple moments like those often become the most treasured memories in the early years of marriage.

Meanwhile life continued unfolding within the church community that had played such an important role in Steven's spiritual development.

His involvement in ministry increased steadily.

At Regency Baptist Church he found opportunities to serve in several areas.

One ministry involved preaching at nursing homes.

These services brought the message of Scripture to elderly residents who often could not attend church services elsewhere. Standing before those gatherings, Steven shared sermons filled with encouragement and biblical truth.

For many listeners the visits brought comfort and hope.

The Bible describes the importance of remembering and caring for older generations. The book of Proverbs teaches, *"The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness"* (Proverbs 16:31, KJV).

Through nursing home preaching Steven witnessed the profound impact that Scripture could have on people nearing the final chapters of life.

Another ministry involved teaching in the bus ministry Sunday school program.

Church buses traveled through neighborhoods picking up children who might not otherwise attend church. The program allowed young people to hear Bible lessons, sing songs, and experience a welcoming environment.

Steven helped teach those classes, guiding children through stories from Scripture and encouraging them to learn God's Word.

He also preached occasionally in junior church.

Junior church services focused on children, presenting biblical truths in ways that younger listeners could understand easily. The opportunity allowed Steven to practice communicating Scripture clearly while reaching young hearts.

At times he found himself preaching once or twice each week in various settings.

Those experiences provided valuable training.

Yet they were not always easy.

Public speaking still felt challenging, and Steven often recognized his own limitations. His earliest sermons sometimes seemed awkward. Nervousness occasionally made his delivery less effective than he hoped.

Even members of his own family expressed uncertainty about his future as a preacher.

His sister once wondered aloud whether he truly possessed the natural ability required for pastoral ministry. Later his wife also

admitted that she sometimes questioned whether preaching would become his long-term calling.

Rather than discouraging him, those doubts strengthened his determination.

He believed that skills develop through practice and perseverance. If God had placed a desire to preach within his heart, then continued effort would eventually refine that ability.

The Bible frequently emphasizes the importance of persistence in service.

The apostle Paul encouraged believers with these words. *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Galatians 6:9, KJV).

Steven took those words seriously.

Each opportunity to speak became a chance to grow.

Meanwhile his wife also became deeply involved in church life.

She volunteered several days each week at the Christian school connected to the church. There she helped tutor students in subjects such as English and grammar.

The role seemed ironic because English was her third language.

Yet her dedication and enthusiasm allowed her to assist many students successfully.

She also devoted herself to studying the Bible with remarkable commitment.

Having grown up outside a strong church environment, she approached Scripture with eager curiosity. Early in their marriage she memorized the names and order of the books of the Bible so she could find passages quickly during church services.

Steven often remembered watching her in church as the pastor announced a Scripture reference. She would hold her Bible carefully while mentally searching through the pages until she located the verse.

At home she frequently spent hours reading large portions of Scripture.

Some evenings Steven returned from work to discover that she had completed an entire book of the Bible in a single day.

Her dedication encouraged him deeply.

Marriage, after all, represents not only companionship but also spiritual partnership.

The book of Ecclesiastes describes the strength of such unity when it says, *"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour"* (Ecclesiastes 4:9, KJV).

Soon another important chapter began for the young couple.

They were expecting their first child.

The news brought both excitement and uncertainty. Like many young parents they wondered how they would manage the new responsibilities while still learning the rhythms of married life.

When the time came for the baby to be born, the delivery took place at a hospital.

Both mother and child emerged safely, and the moment filled their hearts with gratitude.

Yet the experience also proved difficult in certain ways. Medical procedures performed during the birth created discomfort and a challenging recovery period.

Later they would explore different options for childbirth.

Not long after their first child was born, Steven encountered a young family while out evangelizing. The couple eventually began attending the church, and through their friendship Steven and his wife learned about the concept of home birth.

Intrigued by the idea, they began researching the topic carefully.

When they prepared for their second child, his wife chose to give birth at home rather than in a hospital. The experience proved far more peaceful and satisfying for them.

From that point forward most of their children would be born at home.

The decision reflected their desire to approach family life thoughtfully while trusting God's guidance.

The Bible celebrates children as precious blessings given by the Lord.

The book of Psalms declares, *"Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward"* (Psalm 127:3, KJV).

For Steven and his wife, the arrival of their first child marked the beginning of a growing family and a new dimension of responsibility.

As their home filled with the sounds of a baby's laughter and cries, the young couple continued building their life together step by step.

Financial challenges remained.

Work demands continued.

Ministry opportunities expanded.

Yet through each circumstance they held firmly to their shared faith.

The small apartment that once contained only a mattress and a few dishes now held something far more valuable.

A family.

And within that family grew the foundations of a future ministry that would eventually reach far beyond the walls of their humble beginning.

Chapter 15

COLLEGE, MINISTRY TRAINING, AND THE ROAD AHEAD

Moving to Hammond, Indiana

There are seasons in life when faith demands action. A person senses that God is leading toward a new chapter, yet the path ahead remains uncertain. Such moments require courage as well as trust. The familiar must often be left behind so that a greater purpose can unfold.

For Steven Anderson and his young family, that season arrived in the summer of 2003.

By this time Steven was 22 years old. He was married and already the father of two young children. Life in California had begun to

settle into a rhythm. He was working hard, preaching regularly in church ministries, and continuing to grow in his understanding of Scripture.

Yet one desire continued to press upon his heart.

He wanted to prepare more intentionally for ministry.

After much thought and prayer, he decided to pursue formal training at Hyles Anderson College in Hammond, Indiana. The college had long been known for its emphasis on evangelism, preaching, and practical ministry experience. For Steven the school represented an opportunity to strengthen his understanding of the Bible while continuing his passion for soul winning.

Making the decision was one thing.

Acting upon it was another.

Moving across the country with a young family required sacrifice. Their possessions were few, yet even those needed to be reduced further for the long journey. Steven and his wife organized a garage sale and sold nearly everything they owned.

The remaining belongings were packed into a small trailer attached to the back of their car.

The vehicle was a modest 1999 Ford Escort. Once loaded with the trailer, the total weight approached two thousand pounds. For such a small car the burden was considerable.

Nevertheless, they began the long drive across the United States.

The journey tested both patience and perseverance. At times the car struggled to climb the steep grades of Interstate 80 near Salt Lake City. The accelerator pressed to the floor could produce only slow progress as the vehicle crawled up the mountain roads.

Yet mile after mile they continued.

The Bible often describes the Christian life as a journey of faith. The book of Proverbs offers this promise. *"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Proverbs 3:5 to 6, KJV).

For Steven and his family, the cross-country drive felt like a living example of that truth.

Eventually they arrived in Hammond, Indiana.

Their new home was a modest rental house located near the college campus. Though simple, it represented the beginning of a new chapter.

Yet within a short time an unexpected problem appeared.

Steven had planned to attend evening classes so he could work full time during the day. Hyles Anderson College had previously offered a night college program designed especially for married men who needed to support their families while studying.

But shortly after arriving he learned that the night program had been discontinued.

The news struck like a sudden storm.

Without night classes the schedule became extremely difficult. Regular classes would now run during the daytime hours from Tuesday through Friday. This arrangement conflicted directly with most full-time employment opportunities.

Steven had experience working in the fire alarm industry. His hope had been to continue in that field while attending school. However, companies in that industry usually operated during the same daytime hours as the college classes.

One by one the job opportunities disappeared.

He began applying for other positions. Some were lower paying second shift or third shift jobs. Yet even these options came with complications.

One trucking company offered employment at twelve dollars and fifty cents per hour. The position required working Wednesday nights.

For Steven that schedule was unacceptable.

Wednesday evenings were reserved for church.

"I did not move across the country just to go to less church," he reasoned.

The search continued.

Days passed without success.

Money slowly dwindled.

At one point Steven even signed up to donate plasma simply to earn twenty dollars. The decision revealed how serious the situation had become. With a young family to support and limited savings remaining, the pressure grew heavier.

Yet sometimes the greatest answers arrive during the most difficult moments.

While scanning the newspaper one day, Steven noticed an advertisement for a fire alarm technician.

The company was located about ninety minutes away, but the pay immediately captured his attention.

Eighteen dollars per hour.

It was more than he had ever earned before.

He called the number listed in the advertisement. The employer expressed interest in his experience and mentioned that he would be traveling through Hammond the following day.

They agreed to meet.

After hanging up the phone, Steven felt a sense of urgency.

Ten minutes later he called back.

"I do not mind driving to you today," he said. "If you are available, I will come up there right now."

The employer seemed surprised by the initiative but agreed.

Steven drove the ninety minutes to meet him.

The meeting went well.

Within a short time, the employer offered him the job and immediately sent him out to begin working.

The company had recently lost an employee who disappeared without completing several important projects. The situation left the business disorganized and overwhelmed. Steven stepped directly into the chaos.

For several weeks he worked long hours traveling between job sites attempting to repair or complete fire alarm installations.

One particular system proved especially difficult.

Steven had never worked with that type of fire alarm panel before. Without anyone available to train him, he brought one of the panels homes and set it up in his living room. Night after night he studied manuals and experimented with the equipment until he understood how it worked.

His dedication impressed the employer.

Steven also chose to report his work hours carefully. If he spent time struggling unsuccessfully to solve a problem, he refused to charge the company for that time. Only productive hours appeared on his timesheets.

The honesty stood out.

Within two weeks the employer raised his pay from eighteen dollars to twenty dollars per hour and provided him with a company vehicle.

To Steven it felt like an answer to prayer.

The Bible declares, *"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:19, KJV).

Those words suddenly felt very real.

Life soon became extremely busy.

Steven attended college classes each morning from Tuesday through Friday. After classes he worked nearly forty hours each week installing fire alarm systems. Weekends were devoted largely to church and ministry activities.

Despite the demanding schedule he excelled academically.

Each semester he earned strong grades and appeared on the dean's list. His commitment to learning reflected the same determination that had carried him through many earlier challenges.

Yet the classroom was only one part of his education.

Another major influence came through ministry involvement.

Steven joined an outreach effort known as the Black Chapel Ministry connected with First Baptist Church of Hammond. The program focused on reaching communities in South Chicago.

The schedule required dedication.

On Saturday mornings volunteers traveled into the neighborhood knocking on doors and inviting families to church. On Sundays Steven attended morning services with his family in Hammond before boarding a bus that carried workers to Chicago.

There they helped bring people to church services held in the Englewood area. After the service they transported the attendees back to their homes before returning to Hammond in time for the evening service.

Entire weekends revolved around ministry.

Yet Steven embraced the opportunity eagerly.

Soul winning had always been close to his heart.

One particular moment during those years became widely remembered among the students at the college.

In 2005 the church announced an ambitious goal. They hoped to see 25,000 baptisms during the year. To encourage evangelism, they declared that anyone who led a person to Christ could bring them to the church for baptism at any hour of the day or night.

The very next evening Steven was working late installing fire alarm equipment around one in the morning.

During the shift he shared the gospel with a coworker.

The man believed and accepted Christ as his Savior.

Steven immediately remembered the announcement.

He suggested they drive to the church right away.

The coworker agreed.

When they arrived around two in the morning, a security guard questioned them briefly before contacting a deacon who had been assigned to handle baptisms during unusual hours.

Soon the sleepy church leader arrived.

That night in the quiet hours before dawn, the man was baptized.

The moment became a powerful example of enthusiasm for evangelism.

Scripture celebrates such dedication. The book of Acts describes the Philippian jailer who believed in Christ and was baptized the very same night. *"And was baptized, he and all his, straightway"* (Acts 16:33, KJV).

Steven saw the event as a reminder that the gospel should never be delayed.

Meanwhile life at home continued to grow.

Near the end of his time in college Steven and his wife welcomed their third son into the world. The birth brought joy and renewed motivation as Steven worked to complete his studies and prepare for the future.

As graduation approached, he began thinking seriously about what would come next.

His desire was clear.

He wanted to start a church.

Yet the question remained.

Where?

The college provided guidance for graduates through a ministry adviser named Keith Cowing. Students often met with him to discuss possible locations for ministry work or church planting.

Before the meeting Steven prayed earnestly.

He decided that wherever the adviser recommended would be the place he would go.

When the day arrived, he laid several maps on the desk. Cities in the American Southwest captured his interest. Places such as Phoenix, Flagstaff, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and Albuquerque appeared as possibilities.

The conversation that followed would soon shape the direction of his life.

Though Steven could not yet see the full picture, the journey that began with a small car pulling a heavy trailer across the country was preparing him for something remarkable.

A new church.

A new ministry.

And a future that would eventually lead to the founding of Faithful Word Baptist Church.

The road ahead remained unseen, yet the foundation had already been laid through faith, perseverance, and a deep commitment to proclaiming the gospel.

As Scripture reminds believers, *"Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass"* (Psalm 37:5, KJV).

Chapter 16

FOUNDING FAITHFUL WORD BAPTIST CHURCH

Every life devoted to ministry eventually arrives at a moment when preparation gives way to action. Years of learning, observing, serving, and praying converge into a single step of obedience. That step often appears small in the beginning, yet its consequences can reach far beyond what anyone could imagine.

For Steven Anderson, that defining moment came near the completion of his studies at Hyles Anderson College.

During his time in Hammond, Indiana, he had grown spiritually and intellectually. The demanding schedule of college classes, ministry outreach, and long hours of work had refined his

character. Each week he participated in soul winning efforts. Each semester he deepened his understanding of Scripture. The experiences strengthened his conviction that God had called him to preach and to lead.

Yet the question remained.

Where would that ministry begin?

Many graduates from the college pursued positions as assistant pastors or youth leaders within established churches. Others traveled as missionaries to foreign countries. Some joined evangelistic ministries that carried them from city to city preaching revival meetings.

Steven felt drawn toward a different path.

He wanted to plant a church.

The idea of beginning a congregation from the ground up carried both excitement and uncertainty. Church planting requires courage. It demands faith that God will provide people, resources, and opportunities where none previously existed.

Still, the desire remained strong in his heart.

Before making any final decision, Steven met with a ministry adviser from the college. The adviser had experience helping young ministers identify communities where new churches were

needed. Together they looked at maps and discussed possible cities.

Steven had already been considering several locations in the American Southwest.

Phoenix in Arizona appeared on the list.

So did Flagstaff, Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and Albuquerque.

Each city possessed unique characteristics. Some offered rapidly growing populations. Others had limited numbers of independent Baptist churches. All of them presented opportunities for evangelism.

As Steven discussed these possibilities, he prayed quietly in his heart.

He wanted the decision to reflect God's guidance rather than personal preference.

Scripture often reminds believers that the direction of life should be entrusted to the Lord. The book of Proverbs offers this promise. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Proverbs 3:6, KJV).

After considering the options, the focus gradually narrowed toward Phoenix, Arizona.

Phoenix stood as one of the fastest growing cities in the United States. Thousands of people moved into the region every year seeking employment and opportunity. With such rapid growth came countless individuals who had never heard the gospel clearly.

For a young preacher passionate about soul winning, the city presented enormous potential.

Steven sensed that Phoenix might be the place where God wanted him to begin.

With the decision made, the next step involved moving his family once again. Leaving Indiana meant stepping away from the environment where he had spent several years preparing for ministry. Yet the purpose of training had always been to serve others.

Soon the Anderson family began their journey to Arizona.

At that point their family had grown to include three young children. The responsibilities of fatherhood and ministry rested upon Steven's shoulders simultaneously. Yet the challenge did not discourage him. Instead, it strengthened his determination to build a church that would focus on the message of salvation.

The city of Tempe became the starting point.

Tempe sits within the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. The community includes neighborhoods, businesses, and universities that bring together people from many different backgrounds.

For Steven, the city represented fertile ground for evangelism.

The new church would be called Faithful Word Baptist Church.

The name reflected a deep commitment to Scripture. The phrase "faithful word" echoes the language of the Bible itself. In the book of Titus, the apostle Paul describes the qualifications of a church leader using these words. *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"* (Titus 1:9, KJV).

Those words captured the vision Steven carried for the church.

Faithful Word Baptist Church would stand firmly upon the authority of Scripture. Its purpose would be to preach the Bible clearly, defend sound doctrine, and share the gospel boldly.

The first service took place during the Christmas season of 2005.

The setting was simple.

The congregation consisted of a small group of people gathered together with a shared desire to see a church established in the area. There were no large crowds and no elaborate facilities.

Yet something powerful filled that modest meeting.

Faith.

The early days of a church plant often require patience and persistence. Attendance may remain small while the congregation grows slowly. Financial resources can be limited. Leaders must balance preaching, evangelism, and practical responsibilities all at once.

Steven embraced these challenges with enthusiasm.

Week after week he knocked on doors throughout the neighborhoods of Tempe and Phoenix. Each conversation represented an opportunity to share the gospel. Invitations were extended to strangers, families, and students living in nearby communities.

Many of those conversations led to people visiting the church.

Some returned regularly.

Others believed the gospel and were baptized.

The process reflected the pattern described in the book of Acts during the earliest days of Christianity. The Scripture records, *"And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47, KJV).

Growth in the church came not through elaborate marketing strategies but through faithful evangelism.

Soul winning remained the heartbeat of the ministry.

Steven encouraged every member of the congregation to participate in sharing the gospel. The practice became a weekly activity. Groups of believers went out into neighborhoods, parks, and public areas inviting people to hear the message of salvation.

The method reflected the command given by Jesus to His disciples. *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15, KJV).

For the members of Faithful Word Baptist Church, that command was not simply a verse to be quoted.

It was a mission to be lived.

As months passed, the congregation began to grow.

Families joined the church.

New believers were baptized.

Visitors returned to hear more preaching from the Bible.

The sermons delivered from the pulpit focused strongly on Scripture. Steven's preaching style reflected the influences he

had encountered during his own spiritual development. Each message contained numerous Bible passages and emphasized clear doctrinal teaching.

Listeners often commented on the depth of biblical references within the sermons.

The approach reflected a conviction that Scripture itself possesses the power to transform lives.

The apostle Paul once wrote, *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword"* (Hebrews 4:12, KJV).

Steven believed that truth wholeheartedly.

Rather than relying on motivational speeches or entertainment, he sought to build the church around the teaching of God's Word.

Meanwhile the Anderson family continued supporting the ministry together.

Steven's wife played an essential role in the life of the church. Her dedication to Scripture and service strengthened the spiritual environment of the congregation. The children grew up surrounded by church activities, evangelism efforts, and Bible teaching.

The small church plant gradually developed into a vibrant community.

Members formed friendships, supported one another, and worked together in ministry.

Over time the church gained recognition among independent Baptist congregations across the country. Visitors traveled from other states to observe the evangelism methods practiced by the church. Many were inspired by the commitment to soul winning and doctrinal preaching.

Faithful Word Baptist Church soon became more than a local congregation.

It became a center of influence.

The message preached from its pulpit reached beyond the city of Tempe through recorded sermons and online distribution. People from different regions listened to the messages and began contacting the church.

Some pastors adopted similar evangelism practices in their own congregations.

Others sought guidance about planting churches in their communities.

In this way the influence of the church extended far beyond the original group that gathered during those first services.

Looking back on those early days, Steven often reflected upon the remarkable journey that had brought him to that moment.

From a childhood filled with curiosity and adventure to the discovery of Regency Baptist Church.

From the first sermon preached in a youth service to the experience of soul winning.

From missionary travels in Germany to marriage and family life.

Each chapter had prepared him for the responsibility of leading a congregation.

None of those experiences had been wasted.

The Bible often reminds believers that God uses every stage of life to prepare His servants for future work. The apostle Paul expressed this idea when he wrote, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28, KJV).

For Steven Anderson, the founding of Faithful Word Baptist Church represented the beginning of a new mission.

It was not the end of the journey.

It was the starting point.

The small church that began in Tempe would continue growing in influence and impact. Its commitment to evangelism and biblical preaching would inspire countless individuals to pursue the same mission.

And at the center of that mission remained the message that had first captured Steven's heart years earlier.

The gospel.

The simple yet powerful truth that salvation is available to anyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

As the apostle Paul declared with confidence, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"* (Romans 1:16, KJV).

That truth became the foundation upon which Faithful Word Baptist Church was built.

And from that foundation a ministry began that would continue shaping lives for years to come.

Chapter 17

NEW IFB DOCTRINES AND BIBLICAL CONVICTIONS

The growth of a church is not determined merely by numbers, buildings, or programs. The true strength of a church lies in its convictions. What a church believes about the Bible, salvation, evangelism, and holy living ultimately shapes the direction of its ministry. For Steven Anderson, the founding of Faithful Word Baptist Church was not only about establishing a congregation. It was about establishing a clear doctrinal foundation rooted in Scripture.

From the beginning, the church emphasized biblical clarity and doctrinal certainty. The beliefs that guided the ministry would later become closely associated with what many refer to as the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement. While the

label itself came later, the convictions behind it had been forming in Steven's life for many years through personal study, preaching, and ministry experience.

Those convictions centered on a simple but powerful principle. The Bible is the final authority for faith and practice.

Scripture itself affirms this truth. The apostle Paul declared, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (Second Timothy 3:16, KJV).

For Steven, this verse represented more than a theological statement. It served as a guiding principle for ministry. Every sermon, teaching, and outreach effort at Faithful Word Baptist Church would rest upon the authority of the Word of God.

One of the most prominent convictions within the church involved the King James Bible.

Steven had developed a strong belief that the King James Version represented the preserved and reliable English translation of Scripture. His interest in the subject began during his teenage years and continued growing through years of reading, study, and preaching. He believed that using a single trusted translation allowed believers to maintain doctrinal consistency and confidence in the exact words of Scripture.

The conviction did not arise from tradition alone. It came from a broader belief in the preservation of God's Word.

The book of Psalms contains a promise that has encouraged believers for centuries. *"The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever"* (Psalm 12:6 to 7, KJV).

For Steven and the congregation at Faithful Word Baptist Church, that promise reinforced their confidence that God had faithfully preserved His Word throughout history.

Another defining conviction centered on soul winning.

Evangelism had shaped Steven's life since the days he first began knocking on doors at Regency Baptist Church. The experience of seeing people respond to the gospel convinced him that personal evangelism should remain a central activity in every church.

Faithful Word Baptist Church therefore emphasized regular outreach.

Members were encouraged to participate in door-to-door evangelism each week. The practice involved visiting neighborhoods, speaking with residents, and sharing the message of salvation directly from the Bible.

The approach followed the pattern seen in the early church. The book of Acts records how believers spread the gospel from house to house.

"And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:42, KJV).

For Steven, this verse represented a model that modern churches should continue following. Evangelism was not limited to pastors or missionaries. Every believer possessed the privilege and responsibility of sharing the gospel.

The message itself remained simple.

Human beings are sinners.

Christ died for those sins and rose again.

Anyone who believes in Him receives eternal life.

The apostle Paul summarized the gospel with these words. *"That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures"* (First Corinthians 15:3 to 4, KJV).

Faithful Word Baptist Church built its outreach efforts upon that message.

Another conviction that shaped the church involved the concept often called biblical separation.

This teaching encourages believers to live lives that reflect holiness and distinctiveness from worldly influences. The idea does not mean withdrawing completely from society, but it does call Christians to pursue purity in doctrine and behavior.

The apostle Paul expressed this principle clearly when he wrote, *"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing"* (Second Corinthians 6:17, KJV).

For Steven, this verse emphasized the importance of maintaining doctrinal integrity. Churches should remain faithful to biblical teaching rather than compromising in order to gain popularity or acceptance.

Such convictions sometimes required difficult decisions.

Not every church agreed with the positions held by Faithful Word Baptist Church. Differences in doctrine occasionally created tension between various groups within the broader Christian community.

Yet Steven believed that clarity in doctrine ultimately strengthened the church.

The New Testament repeatedly warns believers to guard against false teaching. The apostle Paul instructed Titus to appoint leaders who would defend sound doctrine. *"Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers"* (Titus 1:9, KJV).

That verse captured the responsibility Steven felt as a pastor.

Preaching the truth required both courage and compassion.

Another theological emphasis within the church involved the rejection of Calvinism.

Steven believed strongly that salvation is available to every person who believes in Jesus Christ. He emphasized the universal invitation of the gospel rather than the idea that salvation is limited to a predetermined group.

The most famous verse in the Bible expresses this invitation beautifully. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16, KJV).

The word "whosoever" held deep significance in Steven's preaching. It reminded listeners that salvation was available to anyone willing to believe.

This conviction reinforced the church's commitment to evangelism.

If the gospel invitation truly extended to every person, then sharing that message became even more urgent.

Baptism also held an important place in the church's doctrine.

Faithful Word Baptist Church practiced believer's baptism by immersion. This meant that individuals were baptized after personally trusting Christ as their Savior. The act symbolized the believer's identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

The apostle Paul described this symbolism when he wrote, *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father"* (Romans 6:4, KJV).

Baptism served as a public declaration of faith rather than a means of salvation.

Another principle emphasized within the church involved local church autonomy.

Each congregation operated independently under the authority of Scripture. Rather than belonging to a centralized denominational

structure, churches governed themselves according to biblical teaching.

This independence allowed each church to remain accountable directly to God's Word.

The structure also encouraged the planting of new churches.

As Faithful Word Baptist Church grew, its influence began inspiring other pastors and congregations. Some individuals who attended the church later traveled to different cities to start ministries of their own. Others adopted similar evangelism methods in their communities.

Through these connections the movement associated with the New Independent Fundamental Baptist identity gradually developed.

Yet for Steven the purpose remained simple.

Preach the Bible.

Win souls.

Build churches that honor God.

The apostle Paul once summarized the heart of ministry with these words. *"For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord"* (Second Corinthians 4:5, KJV).

That statement captured the vision guiding Faithful Word Baptist Church.

Every sermon, every outreach effort, and every doctrinal position ultimately pointed back to the same foundation.

The Word of God.

As the church continued growing, these convictions shaped its identity. They provided direction during times of opportunity and clarity during moments of challenge.

And through it all, Steven Anderson remained convinced that the power of ministry did not come from human strength.

It came from the truth of Scripture.

The prophet Isaiah expressed this truth centuries earlier when he wrote, *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please"* (Isaiah 55:11, KJV).

For Steven and the congregation of Faithful Word Baptist Church, that promise continued guiding their mission.

To proclaim the faithful Word of God without compromise.

Chapter 18

THE SOUL WINNING REVOLUTION

When historians look back on movements that have influenced Christian communities, they often discover that those movements were not built merely upon organization or leadership. Instead, they were built upon conviction. A single idea, deeply believed and consistently practiced, can transform a local church and eventually inspire believers across entire regions.

For Steven Anderson and the growing congregation of Faithful Word Baptist Church, that idea was simple and powerful.

Every believer should actively share the gospel.

From the earliest days of the church in Tempe, Arizona, this conviction shaped the rhythm of ministry. Evangelism was not treated as an occasional activity reserved for special events. It was woven into the weekly life of the church. Members regularly gathered to go out into neighborhoods, knock on doors, and speak with people about the message of salvation.

This approach came to be known among many supporters as a soul winning marathon.

The phrase itself carried biblical roots. Scripture often speaks about leading people to righteousness as an act of wisdom and spiritual fruitfulness. The book of Proverbs declares, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise"* (Proverbs 11:30, KJV).

For Steven, this verse captured the heart of Christian service.

The purpose of the church was not simply to hold services or build comfortable gatherings. The purpose was to bring people to the knowledge of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This passion did not appear suddenly when Faithful Word Baptist Church began.

It had been forming in Steven's life for many years.

He remembered the first time he joined experienced soul winners while attending Regency Baptist Church in Sacramento. Walking beside believers who knocked on doors and explained the gospel had opened his eyes to the effectiveness of personal evangelism. The experience showed him that ordinary Christians could share the message of salvation clearly and confidently.

Later, during his time at Hyles Anderson College, that passion intensified even further. Weekend ministry efforts in Chicago exposed him to large scale evangelism campaigns. Long days spent inviting people to church and explaining the gospel deepened his conviction that soul winning should remain central in every church.

Those experiences shaped the vision he carried into Arizona.

From the very beginning of Faithful Word Baptist Church, outreach efforts focused on direct conversations with people in the community. Church members organized weekly times when groups would go out together into surrounding neighborhoods. Equipped with Bibles and gospel tracts, they approached homes and began conversations with anyone willing to listen.

Many of those conversations followed a familiar pattern.

A friendly greeting opened the discussion.

An invitation to church often followed.

Soon the conversation turned toward the question of salvation.

One of the most important passages used during these encounters came from the book of Romans. The verses explained the problem of sin and the solution offered through Christ.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, KJV).

This verse established a truth shared by every person.

Humanity stands in need of forgiveness.

The message continued with the promise found later in the same book.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Romans 10:9, KJV).

These verses formed the foundation of what many believers call the Romans Road. By walking through these passages step by step, church members could clearly present the gospel message to anyone interested in hearing it.

The results soon became evident.

Many individuals responded positively to these conversations. Some accepted invitations to attend church services. Others

chose to place their faith in Christ during the very conversation on their doorstep.

Each decision brought joy to the congregation.

The Bible often describes heaven rejoicing when a sinner turns toward God. Jesus spoke of this celebration when He said, *"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth"* (Luke 15:10, KJV).

For the members of Faithful Word Baptist Church, every person who believed the gospel represented a moment of spiritual victory.

Over time the church developed organized training sessions to help members become confident in sharing their faith. New participants learned how to explain Scripture clearly and answer common questions people might raise during conversations.

This training created a culture where evangelism became a normal part of Christian life.

Children grew up watching their parents participate in outreach.

Teenagers joined groups visiting neighborhoods.

Adults who had once felt nervous about speaking to strangers gradually discovered the joy of leading someone to Christ.

The movement also extended beyond the local community.

Mission trips began reaching other countries and regions. Teams traveled to places such as Jamaica and Botswana where they worked alongside local churches to share the gospel with thousands of people.

During these campaigns large numbers of individuals heard the message of salvation for the first time. Many responded with sincere interest and gratitude.

These experiences reinforced a truth Steven often emphasized in his preaching.

The gospel belongs to everyone.

The command given by Jesus applies to every generation and every culture. In the final moments before His ascension, Christ told His followers, *"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations"* (Matthew 28:19, KJV).

The responsibility did not end with the early disciples.

It continues with believers today.

Within a few years the outreach efforts connected with Faithful Word Baptist Church resulted in thousands of people hearing the gospel message. Many professions of faith were recorded during

those years, and numerous baptisms followed as new believers publicly declared their commitment to Christ.

Yet Steven often reminded the congregation that the numbers themselves were not the ultimate goal.

The true purpose of evangelism was obedience.

Christ had commanded believers to preach the gospel.

Faithfulness meant responding to that command with action.

The apostle Paul expressed a similar sense of urgency in his own ministry. He wrote, *"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"* (First Corinthians 9:16, KJV).

Those words resonated deeply within Steven's heart.

To him soul winning was not merely a strategy.

It was a calling.

Stories from the field often circulated among church members. Individuals returned from outreach events with testimonies of meaningful conversations and unexpected encounters.

Some described meeting people who had been praying for guidance.

Others spoke about families who welcomed them warmly and listened attentively to the Scriptures.

Occasionally the stories carried moments of humor or surprise as well.

Yet each testimony reinforced the same message.

God was working through the simple act of sharing His Word.

As the years passed, the emphasis on soul winning became one of the defining characteristics of Faithful Word Baptist Church. Visitors often noticed the enthusiasm with which members spoke about evangelism. Sermons regularly encouraged believers to participate in outreach and reminded them of the eternal significance of leading someone to Christ.

This focus gradually inspired other churches as well.

Pastors from different regions observed the methods being practiced in Tempe and began implementing similar approaches in their own congregations. New churches emerged with the same passion for evangelism.

What had begun as a local commitment grew into a broader movement.

Looking back on those developments, Steven often reflected upon the simplicity of the idea that sparked it all.

Share the gospel.

Trust the power of Scripture.

Invite people to believe.

The message itself remained unchanged from the earliest days of Christianity.

The apostle Paul summarized that message with clarity when he wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Romans 1:16, KJV).

Those words continued guiding the mission of Faithful Word Baptist Church.

Through weekly outreach, international campaigns, and countless personal conversations, the congregation remained committed to proclaiming the same truth.

A revolution does not always begin with grand announcements or sweeping declarations.

Sometimes it begins with a knock on a door.

A friendly greeting.

And a Bible opened to the promises of salvation.

Chapter 19

CONTROVERSIES, COURAGE, AND GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Whenever a ministry grows in visibility and influence, it inevitably encounters moments of tension and public attention. History shows that many religious leaders who spoke with conviction also faced strong reactions from those who disagreed with their message. The life of Steven Anderson and the ministry of Faithful Word Baptist Church would eventually follow that same pattern.

What began as a small church plant in Tempe, Arizona gradually grew into a ministry known far beyond the local community. Through consistent preaching, active evangelism, and the

expanding reach of recorded sermons, the church's message began traveling across cities, states, and even continents.

With growth came attention.

And with attention came controversy.

Yet from Steven's perspective, such moments were not unexpected. Scripture itself describes the reality that preaching biblical truth often brings both acceptance and opposition. The apostle Paul once reminded Timothy that faithful ministry would not always receive universal approval. He wrote, *"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"* (Second Timothy 3:12, KJV).

For Steven, that verse provided both context and encouragement.

Throughout Christian history, those who proclaimed strong convictions frequently faced criticism or misunderstanding. Prophets in the Old Testament experienced opposition. The apostles in the New Testament encountered resistance from religious authorities and political leaders alike.

Jesus Himself warned His followers that such challenges would accompany their work. He told them, *"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"* (John 15:18, KJV).

As Faithful Word Baptist Church expanded its influence, some of Steven's sermons began drawing the attention of media outlets and public commentators. His preaching often addressed moral and cultural issues directly, using Scripture as the foundation for his conclusions.

Because these messages were delivered with clarity and conviction, they sometimes sparked strong reactions.

In the age of digital media, sermons recorded in a local church could quickly circulate across the internet. Videos shared through online platforms reached viewers far beyond Arizona. Individuals who had never visited Faithful Word Baptist Church could now watch full sermons, interviews, and discussions.

Some listeners found the preaching refreshing.

Others found it controversial.

Yet regardless of the reaction, the attention significantly expanded the reach of the ministry.

News organizations occasionally requested interviews in order to discuss particular statements made in sermons. These conversations often placed Steven in front of cameras and microphones while reporters asked questions about his beliefs.

For Steven, these moments became opportunities to explain the biblical foundations behind his views.

During interviews he frequently emphasized that his preaching aimed to reflect the teachings of Scripture rather than personal opinion. His goal remained the same as it had been since the earliest days of his ministry.

To proclaim the Word of God faithfully.

The prophet Jeremiah once described the powerful effect of God's Word using vivid imagery. He wrote, *"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"* (Jeremiah 23:29, KJV).

Steven often believed that preaching should carry that same intensity.

A message drawn directly from Scripture possesses the ability to challenge hearts and provoke serious reflection.

As the church gained greater visibility, the online presence of the ministry also grew rapidly. Sermons uploaded to digital platforms reached thousands and eventually millions of viewers. People from many different countries began listening to messages recorded in the small church in Tempe.

The internet created a new kind of pulpit.

Instead of speaking only to a local congregation, Steven now addressed an audience that extended around the world.

Emails and messages began arriving from listeners who had encountered the sermons online. Some wrote to express gratitude for clear biblical teaching. Others shared testimonies of personal transformation after hearing the gospel message.

In certain cases, individuals who had never attended Faithful Word Baptist Church personally still felt connected to the ministry through its digital outreach.

This expanding influence led to new church plants in other regions. Pastors inspired by the emphasis on evangelism and doctrinal conviction began starting congregations in their own cities. These churches often shared similar commitments to soul winning, biblical preaching, and local church independence.

Gradually a network of like-minded ministries developed.

Many observers began referring to this group of churches as part of the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement.

For Steven, the phrase simply described churches that desired to return to what they believed were foundational biblical principles. These principles included the authority of Scripture, the urgency of evangelism, and the importance of doctrinal clarity.

The movement did not emerge through centralized organization or formal leadership structures. Instead, it grew organically through shared convictions and mutual encouragement among pastors.

Meanwhile the challenges surrounding public attention continued.

Some critics strongly disagreed with Steven's interpretation of certain biblical passages. Others questioned his approach to addressing moral issues within sermons. In several instances governments in foreign countries even placed restrictions on his travel after particular sermons circulated widely through international media.

For many ministers such opposition might have created hesitation.

Yet Steven viewed these experiences through a different lens.

He often reminded his congregation that the gospel itself has always provoked strong responses. When Jesus preached during His earthly ministry, some listeners followed Him with devotion while others rejected His message.

The apostle Paul encountered similar reactions during his missionary journeys. In some cities crowds gathered eagerly to hear the message of Christ. In others opposition became intense.

Paul summarized that dynamic with a memorable phrase.

"For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish" (Second Corinthians 2:15, KJV).

The same message that brings hope to one person may provoke resistance in another.

From Steven's perspective, remaining faithful to Scripture mattered more than achieving universal approval.

His preaching therefore continued emphasizing the same themes that had defined his ministry from the beginning.

The authority of the Bible.

The necessity of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The importance of living according to biblical principles.

Meanwhile the congregation at Faithful Word Baptist Church continued growing in both numbers and outreach efforts. Weekly soul winning programs remained central to church life. Mission trips extended the gospel message to additional countries. Recorded sermons reached listeners who might never step inside the physical building.

The church that had begun with a small gathering in Tempe had become part of a much larger story.

Yet through every stage of expansion, Steven often reminded his congregation that success should never be measured merely by attention or influence.

True success in ministry comes from faithfulness.

The apostle Paul expressed this principle clearly when he wrote, *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"* (First Corinthians 4:2, KJV).

Faithfulness to God's Word remained the guiding principle behind every sermon, outreach event, and public conversation.

Looking back over the years, the journey from a young preacher knocking on doors in Sacramento to a pastor whose sermons reached listeners around the world appeared remarkable.

Yet the underlying mission had never changed.

To preach the gospel.

To defend biblical truth.

To encourage believers to live boldly for Christ.

As Scripture reminds us, the message of the gospel continues advancing regardless of opposition or controversy.

The prophet Isaiah captured this promise in a powerful declaration from the Lord. *"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please"* (Isaiah 55:11, KJV).

For Steven Anderson and the ministry of Faithful Word Baptist Church, that promise remained a source of confidence.

The Word of God would continue accomplishing its purpose.

And the influence of that message would keep spreading far beyond the place where it was first preached.

Chapter 20

LEGACY, LEADERSHIP, AND THE FUTURE

Every life devoted to ministry eventually reaches a stage where reflection becomes as important as action. The early years are often filled with preparation, growth, and experimentation. Later seasons invite a broader view. They allow a person to look back over the road already traveled while also looking ahead to the work that still remains.

For Steven Anderson, the story of Faithful Word Baptist Church and the wider influence that developed around it represents such a moment of reflection. The journey that began with a small

congregation meeting in Tempe, Arizona has grown into a ministry whose influence extends far beyond its original setting.

Yet the heart of that story is not merely the growth of a church.

It is the story of a vision.

From the earliest days of his Christian life, Steven believed that the Bible should be preached clearly and that the gospel should be shared boldly. That conviction guided his decisions as a young soul winner knocking on doors in Sacramento. It strengthened his determination during the years of training in Hammond, Indiana. It shaped the founding of Faithful Word Baptist Church and the outreach efforts that followed.

Over time the ministry developed into something that reached thousands of people through preaching, evangelism, and digital media. Sermons recorded in a modest church building in Arizona began circulating across the internet. Listeners from many nations encountered those messages and discovered a ministry centered on Scripture and evangelism.

What once existed as a local congregation gradually became a voice heard around the world.

Such influence carries both responsibility and opportunity.

Leadership in ministry requires constant awareness that the purpose of influence is not personal recognition but spiritual impact. Scripture reminds believers that leadership within the church should reflect humility and service rather than personal ambition.

Jesus expressed this principle clearly when He told His disciples, *"Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant"* (Matthew 20:27, KJV).

For Steven, that teaching shaped the way he approached leadership.

His role as pastor involved preaching, teaching, and guiding the congregation. Yet it also involved encouraging others to serve and grow. The ministry of Faithful Word Baptist Church depended not on one individual but on a community of believers who shared the same commitment to Scripture and evangelism.

Many members of the church became deeply involved in outreach efforts. Week after week they participated in soul winning campaigns throughout neighborhoods and cities. The practice of sharing the gospel personally with others became a defining characteristic of the congregation.

In time the influence of these efforts spread beyond the local church.

Pastors and church leaders from other regions began observing the evangelism methods practiced at Faithful Word Baptist Church. Some visited Tempe to see the outreach programs firsthand. Others listened to sermons online and applied similar principles within their own congregations.

Gradually new churches began appearing in different cities, each sharing a similar emphasis on biblical preaching and personal evangelism.

What emerged was not a formal organization but a fellowship of churches united by shared convictions.

Many observers began referring to this network as part of the New Independent Fundamental Baptist movement. The term described congregations that sought to return to what they believed were foundational biblical practices. These included the authority of Scripture, the urgency of soul winning, and the independence of local churches.

For Steven, the growth of such churches represented a natural extension of the vision that had guided Faithful Word Baptist Church from its beginning.

The mission remained simple.

Preach the Bible.

Win souls.

Train believers to share the gospel.

Scripture continually emphasizes the importance of passing faith from one generation to the next. The apostle Paul encouraged young Timothy with these words. *"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (Second Timothy 2:2, KJV).

That verse describes a pattern of spiritual multiplication.

One believer teaches another.

That person then teaches others.

The message continues spreading across generations.

Steven often saw this principle unfolding within the churches influenced by the ministry. Individuals who had once been listeners eventually became leaders themselves. Young men trained in preaching and evangelism began launching ministries of their own. Families raised within the church environment carried their convictions into new communities.

Meanwhile the Anderson family itself continued growing and serving together.

Home life remained an essential part of Steven's story. Marriage had begun with humble circumstances in a small apartment with little furniture and limited resources. Yet over the years that household developed into a strong family centered on faith and shared purpose.

Children grew up surrounded by the rhythms of church life. They watched their parents participate in evangelism. They listened to sermons and Bible lessons. They learned that ministry was not merely something that happened inside a church building on Sunday mornings.

It was a way of life.

The Bible describes the importance of teaching faith within the family. The book of Deuteronomy instructs parents to speak about God's commandments throughout daily life. *"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way"* (Deuteronomy 6:7, KJV).

That vision of family discipleship resonated deeply within the Anderson household.

As the years passed, the influence of Faithful Word Baptist Church continued expanding through technology as well. Online platforms allowed sermons to reach audiences far beyond the city

of Tempe. Viewers from different continents began listening to messages recorded in the church sanctuary.

In many ways the internet became an unexpected mission field.

People who might never attend a church service in person could still encounter the gospel message through recorded preaching. Emails and messages from listeners around the world testified to the impact of these sermons.

Some individuals wrote that they had discovered the gospel for the first time through an online video.

Others shared how biblical teaching had strengthened their faith during difficult seasons.

The apostle Paul once reflected on the far-reaching power of the gospel message. He wrote that the word of God spreads and grows wherever it is proclaimed. *"The word of God grew and multiplied"* (Acts 12:24, KJV).

For Steven, witnessing this expansion reinforced the belief that faithful preaching carries influence far beyond what human planning can achieve.

Yet despite the growth of the ministry and the expanding audience, the fundamental mission remained unchanged.

Faithful Word Baptist Church continued focusing on evangelism, preaching, and discipleship. Weekly soul winning programs still sent groups of believers into neighborhoods with Bibles in their hands. Sermons still emphasized the authority of Scripture and the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Numbers, influence, and recognition were never intended to become the ultimate goal.

Faithfulness remained the priority.

The apostle Paul summarized that principle in a simple statement that continues guiding Christian leaders today. *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"* (First Corinthians 4:2, KJV).

Looking toward the future, Steven often encouraged believers to maintain that same spirit of dedication.

The work of evangelism is never complete.

New generations continue rising who need to hear the gospel. New cities and nations still contain countless individuals who have never encountered the message of salvation clearly.

The mission continues.

Jesus expressed that mission with enduring clarity when He told His followers, *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15, KJV).

Those words remain as relevant today as they were when first spoken.

For Steven Anderson and the ministry connected with Faithful Word Baptist Church, the future represents another chapter in a story still unfolding.

The legacy of the ministry will ultimately depend not on buildings or organizations but on lives changed by the gospel. Each person who hears the message, believes in Christ, and begins living according to Scripture becomes part of that legacy.

And in that sense the story continues.

From a curious child growing up in Sacramento to a pastor whose sermons reach listeners across the world, Steven Anderson's journey reflects the power of conviction and perseverance. The lessons learned through childhood experiences, missionary travels, early preaching opportunities, and years of faithful ministry have all contributed to a life devoted to proclaiming the Word of God.

Yet the final chapter has not yet been written.

The future still holds opportunities to preach, to teach, and to invite others to discover the hope found in Jesus Christ.

As Scripture reminds believers, the work of the gospel continues until the end of time.

The apostle Paul wrote with confidence about that enduring mission. *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (First Corinthians 15:58, KJV).

Those words capture the spirit of the journey.

Steadfast.

Unmovable.

Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

EPILOGUE

A Life of Purpose, A Voice That Echoes

The story of Pastor Steven Anderson is not merely the account of a man who chose ministry. It is the unfolding of a life shaped by conviction, refined through challenges, and propelled by an unwavering commitment to the Word of God.

From the very beginning, there were clear signs that his life would not follow an ordinary path. Born and raised in Sacramento, California, he grew up in a Christian home where Scripture, discipline, and spiritual awareness formed the foundation of daily life. Yet, even within that stability, his early years were marked by constant transitions. Moving between multiple schools and churches forced him to develop resilience, adaptability, and confidence at a young age.

What might have unsettled another child became, in his life, preparation. He learned how to engage with different kinds of people, how to adjust quickly, and how to stand firm in unfamiliar environments. These early experiences would later become essential tools in both ministry and leadership.

His childhood was not only shaped by structure but also by curiosity. He showed a deep interest in learning, music, and skill development. From teaching himself piano to exploring technology and engaging in creative outdoor adventures, he demonstrated a pattern that would define his life: he did not wait for opportunities. He created them.

Yet beyond academics and skills, the most defining moment of his early life came through the gospel. At a young age, he came to understand the message of salvation personally. This was not inherited faith. It became his own conviction. That moment planted a seed that would grow into a lifelong passion for evangelism.

As he moved into his teenage years, there were seasons of questioning and exposure to conflicting beliefs. He encountered doctrinal inconsistencies, observed hypocrisy, and faced the pressures common to youth. However, instead of weakening his faith, these experiences sharpened it. He began to search the

Scriptures more deeply, forming convictions rooted not in tradition, but in the Word itself.

This personal awakening marked a turning point. His faith became active. His convictions became clear. His direction began to take shape.

A significant moment came when he encountered a gospel tract that challenged him with a simple but profound question about eternity. That encounter led him to a strong, Bible-preaching church where he was exposed to passionate preaching, structured soul-winning, and a vibrant spiritual environment. It was here that his calling began to take clearer form.

He did not remain a passive observer. He became involved. He played the piano, participated in youth activities, and soon began preaching. His first sermon, centered on the authority of the King James Bible, revealed both boldness and clarity. Encouragement from those around him confirmed what was already becoming evident: he was called to preach.

At the same time, he stepped into practical ministry through door-to-door evangelism. The act of speaking to strangers about salvation became a defining part of his life. It was not merely an activity. It was a mission.

As he matured, his vision expanded beyond local ministry. His interest in languages and cultures led him to consider missionary work. This desire took him to Germany, where he experienced ministry in a cross-cultural context. There, he learned not only from the work itself, but also from observing different styles of leadership. These experiences refined his understanding of what ministry should be.

It was also in Germany that a deeply personal chapter of his life began. A simple encounter in a public square, centered around a gospel tract, led to a relationship that would become his marriage. What began with a misunderstanding about the word "gospel" became a journey of shared faith, communication, and spiritual growth. Their relationship developed across distance, strengthened by meaningful conversations and a shared commitment to truth.

Marriage marked the beginning of a new season. Life was not easy. Financial limitations, long working hours, and the responsibilities of raising a family required discipline and sacrifice. Yet these challenges did not hinder their progress. They strengthened it.

During these years, he worked diligently in the fire alarm industry, developing both technical skill and strong work ethics. At the same time, he remained deeply involved in ministry.

Whether preaching in nursing homes, teaching children, or serving in church programs, he continued to grow as a servant of God.

A defining step of faith came when he moved his family to Hammond, Indiana, to attend Bible college. This decision was not without risk. Financial uncertainty, academic demands, and family responsibilities created intense pressure. At one point, the situation became so difficult that he considered donating plasma just to provide for his family.

Yet, in that moment of need, provision came. A job opportunity in his field opened unexpectedly, offering not only financial stability but also confirmation of divine guidance. His dedication, integrity, and willingness to learn quickly set him apart, leading to rapid advancement and increased responsibility.

While balancing work and studies, he remained deeply committed to ministry. His involvement in outreach efforts, particularly in urban communities, demonstrated his passion for reaching people with the gospel. His schedule was demanding, yet his focus remained clear.

One of the most remarkable expressions of his commitment occurred when he led a coworker to Christ late at night and immediately took him to be baptized. That moment captured the

essence of his ministry philosophy. The gospel is urgent. Obedience is immediate.

As graduation approached, the question of the future became central. He considered various locations, seeking direction for where to begin a church. Rather than relying solely on personal preference, he approached the decision with prayer and surrender.

This moment of transition marked the threshold between preparation and execution.

Looking back, it becomes clear that every stage of his life contributed to what was ahead. The constant changes of childhood developed adaptability. Early learning cultivated discipline. Spiritual encounters established conviction. Ministry experiences-built confidence. Trials strengthened endurance.

Each piece was part of a larger design.

What began as a desire to serve God grew into something far greater than he initially envisioned. He did not set out to build a widespread influence or lead a movement. His goal was simple. To preach the Word, win souls, and remain faithful.

Yet faithfulness has a way of expanding beyond expectation.

As his ministry developed, his voice reached far beyond local boundaries. Through preaching, teaching, and digital platforms, his message began to impact people across states and nations. What started as a local church effort became a global influence.

Even he did not foresee this. As he reflected, the intention was never to create something large or widely known. It was simply to obey Scripture and trust God with the results.

This perspective remains central to understanding his life. Success, in his view, is not measured by numbers or recognition. It is measured by faithfulness to God's calling.

The story does not end with achievements. It continues as a call to others.

It is a reminder that God often works through ordinary beginnings. That consistency matters more than visibility. That conviction, when rooted in Scripture, produces lasting impact.

As the Scripture declares, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only"* (James 1:22, KJV).

This principle has defined his journey.

And now, it extends beyond him.

The life of Pastor Steven Anderson stands as a testimony that one person, fully committed to truth, can influence countless others. Not by seeking influence, but by seeking obedience.

The pages of this book tell a story. But more importantly, they present a challenge.

To believe the Word. To live it boldly. To share it faithfully.

Because in the end, it is not about the man.

It is about the message.

And that message continues to echo.

REFERENCES

The Holy Bible, King James Version. (1611). Public Domain.

Anderson, S. (2005–2025). *Sermons and preaching ministry*. Faithful Word Baptist Church. https://www.faithfulwordbaptist.org

Faithful Word Baptist Church. (n.d.). *About us*. https://www.faithfulwordbaptist.org

Anderson, S. (2010). *The need for soul winning* [Sermon]. Faithful Word Baptist Church.

Anderson, S. (2012). *New World Order Bible Versions* [Film]. Faithful Word Baptist Church.

Anderson, S. (2014). *Debate with Dr. James White on Bible versions* [Video]. YouTube.

Anderson, S. (2014). *CNN interview on biblical doctrine* [Television interview].

Anderson, S. (2016). *BBC interview on Christian beliefs* [Television interview].

Anderson, S. (2024). *Baptist Bias Podcast interview* [Podcast].

Hyles, J. (1982). *Let's go soul winning*. Hyles-Anderson Publishers.

Scott, J. (1995). *Biblical preaching and ministry principles*. First Baptist Church of Hammond.

First Baptist Church of Hammond. (n.d.). *Church ministries and outreach programs*. https://www.fbc Hammond.org

Hyles-Anderson College. (n.d.). *Academic catalog and ministry training*. https://www.hylesanderson.edu

Ramsey, M. (2003–2005). *Black Chapel Ministry outreach materials*. First Baptist Church of Hammond.

Richards, B. (n.d.). *Missionary work in Germany*.

Hastings, T. (n.d.). *Church planting and construction ministry in Germany*.

Open Doors International. (2023). *Persecution trends and global Christianity*. https://www.opendoors.org

Pew Research Center. (2022). *Global religious trends and evangelism*. https://www.pewresearch.org

Barna Group. (2021). *Evangelism and church engagement statistics*. https://www.barna.com